



***The Essential Manu:***

***Selections of verses from Sir William Jones' faithful rendering of the Manava Dharma Shashtra, one of the most important ancient Indian legal treatises and summaries of the Vedas, into English.***

***With an essay on the Saraswati River controversy and***

***the dating of the perennial wisdom attributed to  
Manu,  
and Jones' original foreword.***

**Manava Dharma Shastra, or  
The Institutes of Manu  
according to the Gloss of Kulluka,  
comprising the Indian System of Duties,  
Religious and Civil.**

**\*\*\***

**Verbally translated from the original,  
with a preface  
by  
Sir William Jones,  
and  
collated with the Sanskrit text,  
by  
Graves Chamney Haughton, Esq., M.A., F.R.S.,  
professor of Hindu Literature in the East India College.**

**\*\*\***

**Third edition  
edited by the Revd. P. Percival,  
professor of vernacular literature, Presidency College, Madras.  
Madras:**

**J. Higginbotham, Mount Road.**

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The second page gives the reader the complete text of the title page of the original, printed 1863 edition of this work.

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**Proposed new English title for the work at hand:**

***The Way of Righteousness for Mankind***

**(the term “man” referring to Manu, and to certain psychological characteristics of the fully developed human being, and not, primarily, to gender)**

**While this modern and *abridged* edition is given the following preliminary title:**

***The Essential Manu***

## **Abstract:**

This paper, probably one of the first of its kind to be presented to the public in Europe and America since the days of Sir William Jones, Henry Thomas Colebrooke, Horace Heyman Wilson and Friedrich Max Müller, consists primarily in a partial and most painstaking digitization of the 1863 edition of the Lawbook of Manu, so-called, with Kulluka Bhatta's ancient, integrated gloss, as translated into English by Sir William Jones, as well as in commentary on the digitized passages, in which the striking parallels between parts of the Manava Dharma Shastra and two exceedingly famous and influential but very different literary works usually thought of as more or less "Western" in nature and origin, and as having no relation to ancient Indian or Vedic literature whatsoever. The two "Western" pieces of literature here referred to are Genesis, with its two creation stories and extensive genealogies, traditionally attributed to Moses, and Plato's singular study of human psychology and its relationship to the evolution and the fortunes of a society, the famous "Republic". ("Western" is here used in a very loose and somewhat novel sense, of course, encompassing not only the so-called "Occident", but also much of the region now styled the Middle East, a region once home to the Egyptian, the Hittite, the Phoenician and the Mesopotamian civilizations, for example, all of which exerted some influence on Greece and the rest of Europe, and which later became part of the rather fractured Greek Empire founded by Alexander, and then of the greater and more unified Roman Empire.)

The facet of the greatest interest to Western researchers and scholars will likely prove to be the systematic comparison of certain features of the extensive creation story narrated by the Indian Manu (known as Swayambhuva/Svayambhuva Manu) to the two shorter “Biblical” creation accounts so familiar to most Westerners due to the inclusion of “the Pentateuch” in the category of Christian Holy Writ – a comparison which, for the sake of convenience, has been summarized in a table – while those primarily interested in metaphysics, or in ascertaining the Path to Spiritual Enlightenment and Wisdom, of which Plato's philosophy is one prominent manifestation, will probably find the subsequent parts of the abridged version of Manu's Laws, such as those taken from the chapter “On Transmigration and final Beatitude”, to be even more conducive to the rekindling of the Inner Fire.

In addition to this, the reader will also, near the end of the paper, find a short discourse on “the Saraswati river controversy”, as one might call it, and on the bearing the ongoing discussion of the history and historicity of the Saraswati river has on another and equally contested issue, namely that of just how old the ancient Indian or Vedic literature – including, but not limited to, the Vedas – actually is. Whatever the eventual outcomes of these debates, it seems safe to say that the ancient high civilization now often spoken of as the Indus river valley civilization, or the Harappan civilization, is in fact partially, or perhaps even wholly, synonymous with the ancient Northern Indian or Vedic civilization which, according to the ancient Sanskrit texts and legends, was founded by Manu and the Great Sages, and of which both this legal treatise and the Ramayana epic poem and the Vedas speak, at great length. In other words, if Manu was, in some sense, the founder of the Indus valley civilization, or at least a part of it – whether he ever appeared on Earth or not – then there could hardly be an ancient literary work deserving of greater attention than the one attributed to him, since only two other civilizations in the recorded history of human kind, the ancient Egyptian and the Sumerian-Akkadian, can compete with

the Harappan one, which some have proposed should be styled the Sindhu-Saraswati civilization instead, since the Saraswati river was at the very heart of its imagination.

## **Short introduction by the modern publisher**

The work you are now looking at, *the Lawbook of Manu*, or *the Ordinances of Manu*, or *the Institutes of Manu*, as it has been called in English, is one of those prominent treatises in the history of world literature that some of the rulers of this world would clearly prefer that you, dear reader, never come to know about, let alone open and read for yourself. Such a desire for the continued obscurity of this ancient text can be the only reason why, on the one hand, it is so rarely mentioned in the West, and, on the other, why it is so often vehemently and

unjustly denounced when it *is* mentioned. If you, dear reader, are aware of the phenomenon I am referring to, and are among those unfortunates who have had some of those “thought-terminating cliches” instilled into you, I would urge you to carefully consider the following, namely that (1) this is actually Holy Scripture in the eyes of hundreds of millions of people, (2) that this is one of the oldest surviving religious tracts humanity is still in possession of, and one of the longest in that category, (3) that one of the greatest minds of the 18th century, Sir William Jones (1746–1794), who is also, arguably, one of the greatest, most pioneering and most open-minded scholars Great Britain and Europe have ever produced – a man of rare achievements, and the founder of modern linguistics, whose life was almost wholly impeccable, and whose biography many could learn a great deal from, even now, in the twentyfirst century – was fascinated by the work now before you, and admired several parts of it, as is evident in his own long preface to it, reproduced below, and (4) that *none* of its teachings can be said by an honest and impartial student to be any “worse” or more “disturbing” than some of the statements and claims and commands found in the Old Testament, as accepted by most ordinary Christians, or in the Israelite Tanakh, or in the Islamic Quran, for example, and that some must, in fairness, be said to equal or even surpass the best parts of any of the religious texts commonly read today in the West and in the Middle East.

Having carefully read all of it ourselves, we would say that Sir Jones' extensive assessment of it, composed well over two hundred years ago, remains a mostly just one, has stood the test of time as far as research is concerned, and should perhaps have been made even more positive and even less critical than it is, and we would strongly encourage the sincere reader to continue reading, and to discover the great merits of this fascinating ancient Indian treatise for him- or herself.

**Important notes regarding the formatting of the text:**



The integrated *gloss* of Kulluka Bhatta has been rendered in *italics*, as in the original, printed William Jones edition, and also in *grey* (number 7 in OpenOffice), so as to make it clear to the reader that the text so rendered is an *addition* to the original Holy Writ (which is what *the Manava Dharma Shastra* claims to be), and has, moreover, not in a single case been rendered in **bold**, even when Bhatta's integrated commentary contains important clarifications or very astute observations. When it comes to the text of the treatise itself, glosses excluded, we have sometimes taken the liberty to render it in **bold**, and occasionally even as underlined, for the sake of calling special attention to certain words or sentences or passages. The original Sanskrit manuscripts have no such features, of course – in fact, they do not even have any capital letters anywhere, as far as we can see. Hence, even the capitalization of letters is actually a type of “gloss”, but one which seems both necessary and permissible when the goal is to present the text to a modern, Western reader.

The printed version of 1863 uses an a with an apostrophe above it to indicate that the a should be pronounced as a somewhat “long”, “clear” a, as the a in English words like “ask” and “casket”, as usually pronounced by the British, for example. It uses, moreover, an s with an apostrophe to indicate that the s should be pronounced “thickly”, i.e. as the s in English words like “shoal” and “shellfish”, or the s in German surnames like Schiller and Schleiermacher, for instance. In this digitized edition, we have simply omitted the apostrophe when it comes to the above mentioned type of a, and spelled the “thick” a-sound as it is usually spelled in English, i.e. as “sh”.

Long explanatory notes and extended commentary have, for the most part, been rendered in a dark green color, called Turquoise 6 in OpenOffice, in an attempt to enable the reader to quickly distinguish between the verses of the Manava Dharma Shastra and longer pieces of text added by the undersigned.

**Edmund Schilvold**  
**Stavanger, Norway**  
**August 2024**

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**Preface by Sir William Jones - philologist, jurist,  
hyperpolyglot, *genius***

**(Start of page XIII in the original, printed version of 1863)**

It is a maxim in the science of legislation and government, that *Laws are of no avail without manners*, or, to explain the sentence more fully, that the best intended legislative provisions would have no beneficial effect even at first, and none at all in a short course of time, unless they were congenial to the disposition and habits, to the religious prejudices [in the old and non-derogatory sense of received traditions and pre-existing beliefs], and approved immemorial usages, of the people for whom they were enacted; especially if that people universally and sincerely believed, that all their ancient usages and established rules of conduct had the sanction of an actual revelation from heaven; the legislature of Britain having shown, in compliance with this maxim, an intention to leave the natives of these Indian provinces in possession of their own Laws, at

least on the titles of contracts and inheritances, we may humbly presume, that all future provisions, for the administration of justice and government in India, will be conformable, as far as the natives are affected by them, to the manners and opinions of the natives themselves; an object, which cannot possibly be attained, until those manners and opinions can be fully and accurately known.

These considerations, and a few others more immediately within my province, were my principal motives for wishing to know, and have induced me at length to publish, that system of duties, religious and civil, and of law in all its branches, which the Hindus

**(End of page XIII in the original, printed version of 1863)**

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firmly believe to have been promulgated in the beginning of time by Manu, son or grandson of Brahma, or, in plain language, the first of created beings, and not the oldest only, but the holiest, of legislators; a system so comprehensive and so minutely exact, that it may be considered as the *Institutes of Hindu Law*, preparatory to the copious *Digest*, which has lately been compiled by *Pandits* of eminent learning, and introductory perhaps to a *Code*, which may supply the many natural defects in the old jurisprudence of this country, and, without any deviation from its principles, accommodate it justly to the improvements of a commercial age.

We are lost in an inextricable labyrinth of ~~imaginary~~ astronomical cycles, Yugas, Mahayugas, Kalpas and Manvantaras, in attempting to calculate the time, when the first Manu, according to the Brahmans, governed this world, and became the progenitor of **mankind**, who from him are called **Manavah**; nor can we, so clouded are the old history and chronology of India with fables and allegories,

ascertain the precise age, when the work, now presented to the Public, was actually composed; **but we are in possession of some evidence, partly extrinsic and partly internal, that it is really one of the oldest compositions [still] existing [in the world].** [Emphasis and strikethrough added, for the sake of making the assessment of the modern editor clearer]

From a text of Parashara, discovered by Mr. Davis, it appears, that the vernal equinox had gone back from the tenth degree of Brahmani to the first of Aswini, or twenty three degrees and twenty minutes, between the days of that Indian philosopher, and the year of your Lord 499, when it coincided with the origin of the Hindu ecliptic; so that Parashara probably flourished near the close of the twelfth century before Christ: now Parashara was the grandson of another sage, named Vasishtha, who is often mentioned in the laws of Manu, and once as contemporary with the divine Bhrigu himself; but the character of Bhrigu, and the whole dramatical arrangement of the book

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### **Explanatory notes:**

**Parashara:** This seems to be Parashara Muni, the grandson of Vasishtha, and the father of Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, the compiler of the Vedas and author of the Mahabharata. Parashara Muni is a maharishi, or great sage, and the alleged author of the first purana, the Vishnu Purana.

**Source:** <https://www.vyasaonline.com/encyclopedia/parashara/>

**Source:** <https://www.vyasaonline.com/encyclopedia/vyasa/>

### **Vasishtha:**

“Vasishtha is one of most revered of the ancient Vedic rishis, and is one of the Saptarishis or seven great sages of India. Some consider Vasishtha to be the first

sage of the Vedanta school of philosophy. There are many myths surrounding the life and teachings of Vasishtha and many ancient texts and treatises are either reverentially named after him or attributed to him.

The name Vasishtha means 'best', 'richest,' or 'most excellent' in Sanskrit.”

**Source:** <https://www.yogapedia.com/definition/11023/vasishtha>

“Vasishtha is a revered Vedic sage in Hinduism. He is one of the Saptarishis (the seven great Rishis) of India. Vasishtha is credited as the chief author of Mandala seven of the Rigveda. Vasishtha and his family are mentioned in Rigvedic verse 10.167.4, other Rigvedic mandalas and in many Vedic texts. His ideas have been influential and he was called as the first sage of the Vedanta school of Hindu philosophy by Adi Shankara. Yoga Vasistha, Vasishtha Samhita, as well as some versions of the Agni Purana and Vishnu Purana are attributed to him. He is the subject of many mythologies, such as him being in possession of the divine cow Kamadhenu and Nandini her child, who could grant anything to their owners. He is famous in Hindu mythologies for his legendary conflicts with sage Vishvamitra.”

**Source:** <https://www.vyasaonline.com/encyclopedia/vasishtha/>

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before us, ~~are clearly~~ [seems] fictitious and ornamental, with a design, too common among ancient lawgivers, of stamping authority on the work by the introduction of supernatural personages, though Vasishtha may have lived many generations before the actual writer of it [the Lawbook of Manu]; who names him, indeed, in one or two places, as a philosopher in an earlier period.

**The style, however, and metre of this work (which there is not the smallest reason to think affectedly obsolete** [i.e. deliberately made to seem old or archaic] are widely different from the language and metrical rules of

**Kalidas** [or Kalidasa?], who unquestionably wrote before the beginning of our era [the “Christian” era]; and **the dialect of Manu is even observed, in many passages, to resemble that of the Veda**, particularly in a departure from the more modern grammatical forms; **whence it must at first view seem very probable, that the laws, now brought to light, were considerably older than those of Solon** [the famous lawgiver of Athens, mentioned by Plato in his *Timaeus*] or even of Lycurgus [the lawgiver of Sparta/Lacedaemon, lauded by Plutarch, priest of Apollo at Delphi], **although the promulgation of them, before they were reduced to writing, might have been coeval** [contemporary] **with the first monarchies established in Egypt or Asia**: but, having had the singular good fortune to procure ancient copies of eleven Upanishads, with a very perspicuous comment, I am enabled to fix with more exactness the probable age of the work before us, and even to limit its highest possible age, by a mode of reasoning, which may be thought new, but will be found, I persuade myself, satisfactory; if the public shall on this occasion give me credit for a few very curious facts, which, though capable of strict proof, can at present be only asserted.

The Sanskrit of the three first Vedas [1] (I need not here speak of the fourth), that of the Manava Dharma Shastra [2], and that of the Puranas [3], differ from each other in pretty exact proportion to the Latin of Numa [surnamed Pompilius, the ancient Ruler and Lawgiver of Rome, supposed to have reigned from c. 715 to 673 B.C. - c.f. Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*], from whose laws entire sentences are preserved [1], that of Appian, which we see in the fragments of the Twelve Tables [2], and that of Cicero [3], or of Lucretius, where he has not affected an obsolete style: if the several changes, therefore, of

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**Explanatory notes:** If Sir Jones by “Kalidas” means the Indian poet Kalidasa, as he probably does, then there is a significant disagreement between Jones' view

on when this person lived, and the one prevailing now, since Jones claims that he “unquestionably wrote before the beginning of our era”, i.e. well over two thousand years ago, while the Encyclopedia Britannica, for instance, thinks it likely – but not certain – that Kalidasa was active during the fifth century A.D. (the summary alleges that he flourished during the 400s, but the text itself reveals other possibilities):

**“It is certain only that the poet lived sometime between the reign of Agnimitra, the second Shunga king (c. 170 BCE) and the hero of one of his dramas, and the Aihole inscription of 634 CE, which lauds Kalidasa. He is apparently imitated, though not named, in the Mandasor inscription of 473. No single hypothesis accounts for all the discordant information and conjecture surrounding this date.**

An opinion accepted by many—but not all—scholars is that Kalidasa should be associated with Chandra Gupta II (reigned c. 380–c. 415). **The most convincing but most conjectural rationale for relating Kalidasa to the brilliant Gupta dynasty is simply the character of his work**, which appears as both the perfect reflection and the most thorough statement of the cultural values of that serene and sophisticated aristocracy.” [Emphasis added]

**Source:** <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Kalidasa>

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Sanskrit and Latin took place, as we may fairly assume, in times very nearly proportional [a reasonable proposition, since both are ancient Indo-European languages], the Veda must have been written [by Vyasa, son of Parashara] about 300 years before these Institutes [of Manu], and about 600 before the Puranas and Itihasas, which, I am fully convinced, were not the production of Vyasa; so



that, if the son of Parashara [c.f. p. XIV] committed the traditional Vedas to writing in the Sanskrit of his father's time [the 1100s B.C.], **the original of this book** [the Manava Dharma Shashtra] **must have received its present form about 880 years before Christ's birth.**

[Recall what was stated above: "(...) so that Parashara probably flourished near the close of the twelfth century before Christ [the 1100s B.C.]: now Parashara was the grandson of another sage, named Vasishtha (...)."] (p. XIV)

If the texts, indeed, which Vyasa collected, had been actually written, in a much older dialect, by the sages preceding him, we must inquire into the greatest possible age of the Vedas themselves: **now one of the longest and finest Upanishads in the second Veda** [the Yayur Veda] **contains three lists, in a regular series upwards, of at most forty-two pupils and preceptors, who successively received and transmitted (probably by oral tradition) the doctrines contained in that Upanishad** and as the old Indian priests were students at fifteen, and instructors at twenty-five, we cannot allow more than ten years, on an average, for each interval between the respective traditions; whence, as there are forty such intervals, in two of the lists, between Vyasa, who arranged the whole work, and Ayasa, who is extolled at the beginning of it, and just as many, in the third list, between the compiler and Yajnyawalkya, who makes the principal figure in it, **we find the highest age of the Yajur Veda to be 1580 years before the birth of our Saviour**, (which would make it [much] older than the five books of Moses [the Torah]) **and that of our Indian law tract about 1280 years before the same epoch.** The former date, however, seems the more probable of the two, because the Hindu sages are said to have delivered their knowledge orally, and the very word *Sruta* [or rather Shruti, from which is derived the term Shrauti], which we often see used for the *Veda* itself, means *what was heard*; not to insist, that Kulluka expressly declares the sense of the *Veda* to be conveyed in the *language* of Vyasa.

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### Explanatory notes:

**Vyasa** (Sanskrit: वसिष्ठ), literally “Compiler”) is also sometimes called Veda Vyasa (वेदव्यास, veda-vyasa, “the one who classified the Vedas”) or Krishna Dvaipāyana (referring to his complexion and birthplace). He is generally considered the author of the Mahabharata, as well as a character in it. He is considered to be the scribe of both the Vedas and Puranas.

**Source:** <https://www.vyasaonline.com/encyclopedia/vyasa/>

**Yajnavalkya** is the name of a sage and teacher who was one of the earliest Hindu and yogic philosophers and who later became a wandering ascetic. Some believe he was an incarnation of the Hindu god, Brahma. **Source:** <https://www.yogapedia.com/definition/7945/yajnavalkya>

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Whether Manu or Manus in the nominative and Menos in an oblique case [a grammatical case or casus other than nominative], was the same personage with Minos [the legendary king of the island of Crete], let others determine; **but he must indubitably have been far older than the work, which contains his laws**, and, though perhaps he was never in Crete, yet some of his institutions may well have been adopted in that island, whence Lycurgus [the famous Lawgiver of Sparta, on whom Plutarch wrote an excellent biography], a century or two afterwards, may have imported them to Sparta.

**There is certainly a strong resemblance, though obscured and faded by**

**time, between our Manu with his divine Bull, whom he names as Dharma himself, or the genius of abstract justice, and the Mneues** [probably the same personage as Menes, who some, but not all, equate with Narmer] **of Egypt, with his companion or symbol, Apis**; and, though we should be constantly on our guard against the delusion of etymological conjecture, yet we cannot but admit that Minos and Mneues, or Mneuis, have only Greek terminations, but that the crude noun is composed of the same radical letters both in Greek and in Sanskrit.

That Apis and Mneuis, says the Analyst of ancient Mythology, were both representations of some personage, appears from the testimony of Lycophron and his scholiast [this probably refers to Lycophron's poem *Alexandra* – c.f. Simon Hornblower's 2015 edition]; and that personage was the same, who in Crete was styled Minos, and who was also represented under the emblem of the Minotaur [part man and part bull, as Ovid says; probably another instance of the ancient method for representing various attributes in a visual and metaphorical manner; consider the beings with the heads of eagles and fishes found in ancient Mesopotamian art and literature (the “abkallu” or “watchers”), for example]:

Diodorus, who confines him to Egypt, speaks of him by the title of the bull Mneuis, as the first lawgiver, and says, “That he lived after the age of the gods and heroes, when a change was made in the manner of life among men; that he was a man of a most exalted soul, and a great promoter of civil society, which he benefited by his laws; and those laws were unwritten, and received by him from the chief Egyptian deity Hermes, who conferred them on the world as a gift of the highest importance.”

He was the same, adds my learned friend, with Menes [who could be identical to Narmer], whom the Egyptians represented as their first king and principal benefactor,

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Comment: While we have not yet been able to locate the source of the quote from Diodorus Siculus given by Sir Jones' above, we have found the following interesting passages:

[4.77.1] Afterwards Daedalus made his escape out of Attica to Crete, where, being admired because of the fame of his art, he became a friend of Minos who was king there. Now according to the myth which has been handed down to us Pasiphaë, the wife of Minos, became enamoured of the bull, and Daedalus, by fashioning a contrivance in the shape of a cow, assisted Pasiphaë to gratify her passion.

[4.77.2] In explanation of this the myths offer the following account: Before this time it had been the custom of Minos annually to dedicate to Poseidon the fairest bull born in his herds and to sacrifice it to the god; but at the time in question there was born a bull of extraordinary beauty and he sacrificed another from among those which were inferior, whereupon Poseidon, becoming angry at Minos, caused his wife Pasiphaë to become enamoured of the bull. (4.77.1–4.77.2)

Source: <https://www.theoi.com/Text/DiodorusSiculus4D.html>

Moreover, because of his [Rhadamanthys, brother of Minos] very great justice, the myth has sprung up that he was appointed to be judge in Hades, where his decisions separate the good from the wicked. And the same honour has also been attained by Minos, because he ruled wholly in accordance with law and paid greatest heed to justice. (5.79.2)

**Source:** <https://www.theoi.com/Text/DiodorusSiculus5C.html>

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who first sacrificed to the gods, and brought about a great change in diet.

**If Minos, the son of Jupiter [or Zeus], whom the Cretans, from national vanity, might have made a native of their own island, was really the same person with Manu, the son of Brahma, we have the good fortune to restore, by means of Indian literature, the most celebrated system of heathen [“pagan”] jurisprudence** [also consider Plato's reference to an ancient constitution, η αρχαία καταστάσις (he archaia katastasis), at *Politeia* 547b], and this work might have been entitled The Laws of Minos;

but the paradox is too singular to be confidently asserted, and the geographical part of the book, with most of the allusions to natural history, must indubitably have been written after the Hindu race had settled to the south of Himalaya.

We cannot but remark that the word Manu has no relation whatever to the Moon; and that **it was the seventh, not the first, of that name [Manu], whom the Brahmans believe to have been preserved in an ark from the general deluge: him they call the Child of the Sun, to distinguish him from our legislator** [C.f. Jude 1:14: “Enoch, the Seventh from Adam”, also associated with the Sun, and the Mesopotamian hero on whom he is based, i.e. Enmeduranki, king of the antediluvian City of the Sun, Sippar (Annus, 2010, p. 278, p. 284)]; but they assign to his brother Yama *the office* (which the Greeks were pleased to confer on Minos) *of Judge in the shades below*.

The name of Manu is clearly derived (like *menees*, *mens*, and *mind*) from the root men, to *understand* [from which Greek made the verb μανθάνω (manthano), “I

understand”, and μάντις (mantis), seer or prophet]; and it signifies, as all the Pandits agree, *intelligent*, particularly in **the doctrines of the Veda, which the composer of our Dharma Shastra must have studied very diligently; since great numbers of its texts, changed only in a few syllables for the sake of the measure, are interspersed through the work and cited at length in the commentaries**; the Public may, therefore, assure themselves, that they now possess a considerable part of the Hindu scripture, without the dulness [dullness] of its profane ritual or much of its mystical jargon. **Dara Shucuh was persuaded, and not without sound reason, that the first Manu of the Brahmans could be no other person than the progenitor of mankind**, to whom Jews, Christians,

**(End of page XVIII)**

**Explanatory notes:** Dara Shucuh: “Dara Shikoh, also known as Dara Shukoh, (20 March 1615–30 August 1659) was the eldest son and heir-apparent of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan.

Dara was designated with the title Padshahzada-i-Buzurg Martaba ('Prince of High Rank') and was favoured as a successor by his father and his elder sister, Princess Jahanara Begum. In the war of succession which ensued after Shah Jahan's illness in 1657, Dara was defeated by his younger brother Prince Muhiuddin (later, the Emperor Aurangzeb). He was executed in 1659 on Aurangzeb's orders in a bitter struggle for the imperial throne.

Dara was a liberal-minded unorthodox Muslim as opposed to the orthodox Aurangzeb; he authored the work *The Confluence of the Two Seas*, which argues for the harmony of Sufi philosophy in Islam and Vedanta philosophy in Hinduism.” Source: Wikipedia

See also <http://www.darashikoh.info/>

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and Musalmans [Muslims] unite in giving the name of Adam; but, whoever he might have been, he is highly honoured by name in the Veda itself, where it is declared, that “whatever Manu pronounced, was **a medicine for the soul**” [in Plato's *Georgias*, Justice or δικαιοσύνη (dikaiosyne) is stated to be to the Soul as medicine is to the physical body, since, we may safely infer, both deal with healing and wholeness], and **the sage Vrihaspati, now supposed to preside over the planet Jupiter**, says in his own law tract, that

**Manu held the first rank among legislators, because he had expressed in his code the whole sense of the Veda**; that no code was approved, which contradicted Manu; that other Shastras, and treatises on grammar or logic, retained splendour so long only, as Manu, who taught the way to just wealth, to virtue, and to final happiness, was not seen in competition with them;

**Vyasa too, the son of Parasara before mentioned, has decided, that the Veda with its Angas, or the six compositions deduced from it, the revealed system of medicine, the Puranas, or sacred histories, and the code of Manu, were four works of supreme authority**, which ought never to be shaken by arguments merely human.

It is the general opinion of Pandits, that Brahma taught his laws to Manu in a hundred thousand verses, which Manu explained to the primitive world in the very words of the book now translated, where he names himself, after the manner of ancient sages, in the third person;

but, in a short preface to the law tract of Narad [or Narada], it is asserted, that **Manu, having written the laws of Brahma in a hundred thousand *slokas***

or couplets, arranged [them] under *twenty-four* heads in a *thousand* chapters [1], [and] delivered the work to Narad, the sage among gods, who abridged it, for the use of mankind, in *twelve thousand* verses [2], and gave them to a son of Bhrigu, named Sumati, who, for greater ease to the human race, reduced them to *four thousand* [3]; that mortals read only the second abridgement by Sumati, while the gods of the lower heaven, and the band of

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**Explanatory note: Narada:** “He is also referred to as the king of all sages or rishis, meaning Rishiraj. He was gifted with the boon of knowledge, past, present and future. Once his knowledge became a hindrance in God's designs. He was therefore cursed that although he would tell the truth and warn people, they would never believe him. In Indian texts, Narada travels to distant worlds and realms (Sanskrit: lokas). He is depicted carrying a khartal (musical instrument) and tambura with the name Mahathi and is generally regarded as one of the great masters of the ancient musical instrument.”

Source: <https://www.vyasaonline.com/encyclopedia/narada/>

**Not to be confused with Narayana:** “Narayana (Sanskrit: नारायण, IAST: Narayaṇa, also Narayan) is the supreme absolute being in Hinduism and is considered as the supreme deity in Vaishnavism. The Bhagavata Purana declares Narayana as the Para-Brahman (Supreme Lord) who creates unlimited universes and enters each one of them as Lord of the Universe. (...)”

“According to the Bhagavata Purana, Lord Narayana is the supreme controller and is supreme among deities, the ultimate soul. **He is also called as Surya Narayana, one who shines like the brilliant sun.** He is said to pervade whatever is seen or heard in this universe from inside and outside alike. **He is also mainly associated with the cosmic waters of creation.** (...)”



“There are multiple variations in the etymology of Lord Narayana. The word 'Narayana' means 'The one who rests on waters of creation'. **The Manusmriti states, The waters are called 'narah', for the waters are, indeed, produced by Nara-Narayana (the first Being); as they were his first residence 'ayana', he is called Narayana.**”

**Source:** <https://www.vyasaonline.com/encyclopedia/narayana/>

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celestial musicians, are engaged in studying the primary code [there is, in other words, a divine or celestial precursor to or “prototype” of the merely wordly item – a way of thinking also characteristic of Platonism and Pythagoreanism], beginning with the fifth verse, a little varied, of the work now extant on earth; but that nothing remains of Narad's abridgement, except an elegant epitome of the *ninth* original title *on the administration of justice*.

Now, since these institutes [the ones given in the present work] consist only of *two thousand six hundred and eightyfive* verses, they cannot be the whole work ascribed to Sumati, which is probably distinguished by the name of the *Vridhdha*, or ancient, *Manava*, and cannot be found entire; though several passages from it, which have been preserved by tradition, are occasionally cited in the new digest. A number of glosses or comments on Manu were composed by the Munis, or old philosophers [c.f. the Norse name of the second of Odin's or Wotan's two wise ravens, Munin], whose treatises, together with that before us, constitute the *Dharma Shastra*, in a collective sense, or *Body of Law*; **among the more modern commentaries, that called Medhatithi, that by Govindaraja, and that by Dharani-Dhara, were once in the greatest repute; but the first was reckoned prolix and unequal; the second, concise but obscure; and the**

**third, often erroneous.**

At length appeared **Kulluka Bhatta**; who, after a painful course of study and the collation of numerous manuscripts, produced a work, of which it may, perhaps, be said very truly, that it is the shortest, yet the most luminous, the least ostentatious, yet the most learned, the deepest, yet the most agreeable, commentary ever composed on any author ancient or modern, *European* or *Asiatic*.

**The *Pandits*** [or *Pundits*; from the Sanskrit term *pandita*, wise or learned person] **care so little for genuine chronology, that none of them can tell me the age of Kulluka, whom they always name with applause**; but he informs us himself, that he was a *Brahman* of the *Varendra* tribe, whose family had been long settled in ***Gaur*** or *Bengal*, but that he had chosen his residence among the learned on the banks of the holy river [Ganga/Ganges] at

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*Kasi*. His text and interpretation I have almost implicitly [without reservation] followed, though I had myself collated many copies of Manu, and among them a manuscript of a very ancient date: his gloss is here printed in *Italics* [but in this new edition, we will also, for the sake of clarity, color Bhatta's integrated gloss *grey*]; and any reader, who may choose to pass it over as if unprinted, will have in Roman letters [i.e. "ordinary" letters] an exact version of the original, and may form some idea of its character and structure, as well as of the *Sanskrit* idiom, which must necessarily be preserved in a verbal translation; and a translation, not scrupulously verbal, would have been highly improper in a work on so delicate and momentous a subject as private and criminal jurisprudence.

**Should a series of *Brahmans* omit, for three generations, the reading of Manu, their sacerdotal class, as all the *Pandits* assure me, would in strictness be forfeited; but they must explain it only to their pupils of the three highest classes;** and the *Brahman*, who read it with me, requested most earnestly, that his name might be concealed; nor would he have read it for any consideration on a forbidden day of the moon, or without the ceremonies prescribed in the second and fourth chapters for a lecture on the Veda:

so great, indeed, is the idea of sanctity annexed to this book, that, when the chief native magistrate at *Benares* [or Varanasi] endeavoured, at my request, to procure a *Persian* translation of it, before I had a hope of being at any time able to understand the original, the *Pandits* of his court unanimously and positively refused to assist in the work; nor should I have procured it at all, if a wealthy *Hindu* at *Gaya* had not caused the version to be made by some of his dependants, at the desire of my friend Mr. Law.

The *Persian* translation of Manu, like all others from the *Sanskrit* into that language, is a rude intermixture of the text, loosely rendered, with some old or new comment, and often with the crude notions of the translator;

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### **Explanatory note: Benares/Varanasi:**

“Varanasi is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. It was one of the first major urban settlements in the middle Ganges valley. By the 2nd millennium BCE Varanasi was a seat of Vedic religion and philosophy and was also a commercial and industrial centre famous for its muslin and silk fabrics, perfumes, ivory works, and sculpture. It was the capital of the kingdom of Kashi during the time of the Buddha (6th century BCE), who gave his first sermon

nearby at Sarnath. Varanasi remained a centre of religious, educational, and artistic activities as attested by the celebrated Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang, who visited it about 635 CE and said that the city extended for about 3 miles (5 km) along the western bank of the Ganges.”

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Varanasi>

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and, though it expresses the general sense of the original, yet it swarms with errors, imputable partly to haste, and partly to ignorance: thus where Manu says, that *emissaries are the eyes of a prince*, the Persian phrase makes him ascribe four eyes to the person of a king; for the word *char*, which means *an emissary in Sanskrit*, signifies *four* in the popular dialect.

The work, now presented to the *European* world, contains [an] abundance of curious matter extremely interesting both to speculative lawyers and antiquaries, with many beauties, which need not be pointed out, and with many blemishes, which cannot be justified or palliated. (...) **nevertheless, a spirit of sublime devotion, of benevolence to mankind, and of amiable tenderness to all sentient creatures, pervades the whole work**; the style of it has a certain austere majesty, that sounds like the language of legislation and extorts a respectful awe; the sentiments of independence on all beings but God [?], and the harsh admonitions even to kings, are truly noble; and the many panegyries on the *Gayatri*, the *Mother*, as it is called, of the *Veda*, prove the author to have *adored* (not the visible material sun, but) *that divine and incomparably greater light*, to

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**(Start of page XXIII)**

use the words of the most venerable text in the Indian scripture, *which illumines*

*all, delights all, from which all proceed, to which all must return, and which alone can irradiate* (not our visual organs merely, but our souls and) *our intellects*. [A beautiful passage, and one with which Plato would have been able to wholeheartedly agree.]

**Explanatory notes:** The name Gayatri can refer to both the Gayatri Mantra and to a great, “feminine” metaphysical principle, and there are many similarities between Gayatri and Savitri, wife of Brahma, and between those two and Aditi, the Mother of the (Lesser) Gods, whose name means “unbounded” [c.f. Proclus' *On the Theology of Plato*, and the concepts of Bounded and Unbounded].

It is our hypothesis that Gayatri/Savitri/Aditi may be correlated with, and occupies a role similar to, Plato's Kyria or Queen, who is the “Mother” of Helios, and who is associated with Plato's luminous Idea of the Good, the Hidden or Spiritual Sun of Plato's grand schema – and *what a curious coincidence* it is that Plato, in one of his most wonderful discourses on that Kyria, states that She is the cause, *aitia*, of the world and everything in it. (Aitia is composed of the negative prefix a-, shared by Greek with Sanskrit, and itia (ιτιά/ἰτέα), an ancient term for willow, and for the bark of the willow. In ancient Greek, the term had already lost its initial v- or w-sound, just as in the case of idea, but in Norwegian, we find it, probably, as “vidje”/“vidja” (together with “vier” and “selje”, species belonging to the genus willow). Amazingly, vidje is, to this very day, a natural material used to bind handmade objects together, and thus closely associated with the act of binding. Hence, “a-itia”, or “a-vidia”, could have had connotations of “unbounded”.

According to the ancient texts, the various names of what appears to be the same divine entity can also refer to different modes of the Sun: “The Goddess is related to the worship of the Sun at sunrise (Gayatri), noon (Savitri), and sunset (Sarasvati) [or Saraswati – which is also the name of the great ancient river which dried up several millennia ago], which are three Sandhyas or transitional

times (...). As Ushas, she is also the Goddess of Dawn in the Vedas [and here we may note that ush is cognate with the Greek eos, the Norwegian ljós and the Swedish ljus]. As Aditi, she is the Universal Mother Goddess (...).

**Source:** <https://www.vedanet.com/the-great-goddess-and-world-mother-mahadevi-in-vedic-astrology/>

In the Garuda Purana, moreover, in a passage describing a water purification ritual, capable of washing away sins, we read that “Gayatri is crimson-coloured and Savitri is white-hued and Sarasvati is dark-blue. These are called the three Sandhyas.”

**Source:**

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/the-garuda-purana-dutt/d/doc122511.html>

Whatever opinion in short may be formed of Manu and his laws, in a country [Great Britain] happily enlightened by sound philosophy and the only true revelation [Sir Jones is here evidently thinking of Christianity and Christian Holy Scripture, which is unsurprising, and should not give rise to condemnation, since he was, for all his remarkable intelligence and openness, a child of the 1700s, and could not anticipate the earth-shattering and Bible-shattering discoveries of the 1800s], it must be remembered, that those laws are actually revered, as the word of the Most High, by nations of great importance to the political and commercial interests of Europe, and particularly by many millions of Hindu subjects, whose well directed industry would add largely to the wealth of Britain, and who ask no more in return than protection for their persons and places of abode, justice in their temporal concerns, indulgence to the prejudices of their old religion, and the benefit of those laws, which they have been taught to believe sacred, and which alone they can possibly comprehend.

**W. Jones**

**(End of page XXIII)**

**Summary of parallels between the creation story of Manu and the creation accounts found in the Biblical Genesis (i.e. in the Torah), discovered during the process of reading and digitization:**

**The extraordinary parallels between the Northern Indian/Vedic and**

the Biblical or Mosaic creation stories			
Number (ordered in the sequence they appear in the "Manusmriti")	The <i>Manava Dharma Shastra</i> (the <i>Lawbook of Manu</i> )	Genesis (Bereshit, Bereishit)	Editorial comments
1	Initial "darkness" and "nothingness" (the absence of a created universe and a manifested or revealed god) (verse 1:6)	Initial "darkness" and "nothingness" (the absence of a created universe and a manifested or revealed god) (verse 1:2)	
2	Divine Light dispells "the gloom", the Supreme Deity, the First Cause, manifests itself as a radiant "Golden Embryo" or "Spiritual Sun" ("Hiranyagarbha" or "Brahma") (1:6-7, 1:9)	"God" ("elohim") creates Divine Light and "seperates" it from the darkness (1:3-4) Interpretations: The Ohr Ein Sof is manifested (Judaism), the Eternal Word comes into being (Christianity), beginning of "creation out of 'nothing'"	A possible parallel to these intial parts of the two theologies is found in Plato's " <i>Republic</i> ", in the passage mentioning a "father" of whom Socrates refuses to speak, as well as a child or offspring - entities which we believe should be correlated with the good itself and the idea of the good, mentioned elsewhere in the <i>Politeia</i> , and with the one itself beyond being, mentioned in



		(Christianity)	Plato's Sophist, and the Spiritual Sun of the cave analogy.
3	A divine spirit ("Nara") is portrayed as moving on (or perhaps in) water (apa), hence, "Nara" is called "Narayana", from "Nara" and "ayana", "place of motion") (1:10)	The divine spirit ("ruach") of "God" ("elohim") is portrayed as moving on or hovering over a "face" of "the waters" (1:2)	
4	"Heaven" and "Earth" are created when the manifested divine being, the Golden Embryo or Egg, divides it in two (1:12-13)	The heavens and the earth are created by "God" ("elohim") (1:1)	Although these "events" are described as taking place in time, such narrations could be viewed as a way of making metaphysical realities which actually lie beyond linear time, and which therefore have no chronological beginnings or ending, somewhat comprehensible to those unaccustomed to the concept of a state of being transcending past, present and future.
5	Brahma gives "all	"Adam" ("ha	

	creatures distinct names, distinct acts, and distinct occupations; as they had been revealed in the pre-existing Veda” (1:21)	adam”, “the adam”) names the creatures brought before him by “God” (“yhwh elohim”) (2:19) Interpretation: The original Torah is heavenly or pre-existing	
6	Brahma desires the multiplying and/or prospering of the inhabitants of the worlds (including human kind) (1:31)	“God” (“elohim”) asks or commands the first humans to be fruitful and multiply (1:28)	
7	Brahma creates a female power out of himself, by dividing “his own substance”, and becoming “half male, half female, <i>or nature active and passive</i> ” (1:32) The event is clearly a metaphysical or spiritual one	A female (“issaha”) is created out of “Adam” (“ha adam”, the adam) by “God” (“yhwh elohim”) The event is indubitably depicted as a material or physical one	Interestingly, this female is only named in 3:20, and then as “Eve” or “havah”, a name which, if the vowels are changed slightly, has the meaning of “disaster” instead of “life”.

8	<p>Having created both this universe and Manu, Brahma is (re)absorbed (back) “in[to] the supreme Spirit, changing <i>the</i> time <i>of energy</i> for <i>the</i> time <i>of repose</i>.” (1:51)</p>	<p>Having created both this universe and “the adam”, “God” (“elohim”) goes into a state of repose or desisting or ceasing to act (“shabath”) on the seventh day, or in the seventh age (“yom” can mean both day and an extended period of time) (2:2)</p>	
9	<p>Vaivasvata (or Vaivaswata) Manu, “child of the sun” [“vivasvatsuta” in the Sanskrit, i.e. son of Vivasvat, the Sun], is stated to be the seventh from the first Manu, Svayambhuva Manu (the divine lawgiver) (1:64) The five between Svayambhuva and Vaivasvata are:</p>	<p>Enoch (“henoch”), “the seventh from Adam” (Jude 1:14), is closely associated with the Sun, the easily decipherable key being that Enoch is stated to be 365 years when he ceased to be, due to him being being taken or accepted or received by “elohim” (5:21-24) The five between</p>	<p>Both of these lists of “patriarchs” or “Manus” also correspond, at least partially, to the so-called Sumerian King List, of which several versions exist – the Sumerian “Enoch” or “Vaivasvata” being Enmeduranki, also known as Enmendurana and Euedoranchos, who is also the seventh from the first. Enmeduranki reigned over the antediluvian City of the Sun, called Sippar.</p>

	Svarochisha, Uttama, Tapasa, Raivata, Chakshusha	Adam and Enoch are: Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared	The fact that such close parallels exist in three different cultures is very remarkable, and would seem to indicate that they all have a common origin – possibly in real, historical personages. The Sumerian literature also features shepherds, a flood and a flood survivor.
10	Each age (“yuga”) or “day” is said to be preceded by a morning or period of twilight (a dawn), and to be succeeded by an evening or second period of twilight (a dusk) (1:69–70)	The account of each period of creation is concluded with the somewhat strange statement: “And there was evening, and there was morning (...).” 1:5, 1:8, 1:13, etc.	
<p><b>End of preliminary study of parallels between Genesis and the Lawbook of Manu</b></p>			

## Contents of the *Manava Dharma*

# ***Shastra***

## **The original table of contents in Sir William Jones' edition of *the Lawbook of Manu***

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**This *new edition* of the work - the rest of which will be presented in the future, in a different paper (since digitizing the entire 1863 edition properly will be an extremely time-consuming task) - *only* includes extensive excerpts from *some* of these chapters - the first and the last and the second last, which are the chapters containing the most *extensive* and the most *revealing* metaphysical, theological and cosmological teachings. Hence, the title of “the Essential Manu” is suggested. - E.S.**

# **The Laws of Manu,**

## **Son of Brahma**

### **Chapter I**

#### **On the Creation; with a Summary of the Contents**

**[An account of how the visible and invisible parts of the universe were engendered - an account which is strangely similar to and evocative of the creation accounts familiar to most “Western” readers from “Genesis”, but also (in our view) more complex and sophisticated, especially in terms of metaphysics and chronology.]**

**1. Manu sat reclined, with his attention fixed on one object, *the Supreme God; when the divine Sages approached him*, and, after mutual salutations in due form, delivered the following address:**

**2. Deign, sovereign ruler, to appraise [orig: apprise] us of the sacred laws in their order, as they must be followed by all the *four* classes, and by each of them, in their several degrees, together with the duties of every mixed class.**

**3. For thou, Lord, *and thou only among mortals*, knowest the true sense, **the****

**first principle**, and the prescribed ceremonies, of **this universal, supernatural Veda**, unlimited in extent and unequalled in authority.

**(p. 1 in the original, printed version)**

**[Manu (the first Manu, styled Svayambhuva, which can mean “self-existing” or “self-manifested”) responded thus:]**

**5. This *universe* existed only *in the first divine idea yet unexpanded, as if involved in darkness*, imperceptible, undefinable, undiscoverable by reason, *and undiscovered by revelation*, as if it were wholly immersed in sleep:**

**6. Then the *sole self-existing power* [the Supreme Deity, in his most senior, unknowable form], himself undiscerned, but making this world discernible, with five elements and other principles *of nature*, appeared with undiminished glory, *expanding his idea*, or dispelling the gloom.**

[C.f. Genesis 1:3; “there was light”; the conceptual similarities between this verse, 1:6, and Gen. 3:1, are astounding. But c.f. also Rigveda 10.129.3]

**7. He, whom the mind alone can perceive**, whose essence eludes the external organs, who has no visible parts, **who exists from eternity**, even he, the soul of all beings, whom no being can comprehend, **shone forth in person.**

**8. He**, having willed to produce various beings from his own divine substance, first **with a thought created the waters, and placed in them a productive seed: [in Genesis, the “water” is present from the beginning of the narrative, and so is the “earth”]**

**9. The *seed* became an egg [obviously a metaphor] bright as gold, blazing like**

the luminary with a thousand beams [like the Sun]; and in that egg, he [the Supreme Deity] was born himself, *in the* [lesser] *form of* Brahma, the great forefather of all spirits.

[If Genesis was derived from this first chapter of the *Manusmriti* (a question which cannot be conclusively answered at this stage of the investigation), then this part of the account was, for some reason, eliminated – or perhaps we should say removed from view, by partly encoding the more esoteric messages into the text by way of Gematria, and partly moving them into other texts.]

**10.** The waters are called nara, because they were the production of Nara, *or the spirit of* God; and since they were his first ayana, *or place of motion*, he thence is named Narayana, *or moving on the waters*.

[C.f. Genesis 1:2; “(...) and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (NKJV) – the similarity between these two passages is so great that it cannot be due to a coincidence. Even a very literal translation of the “Hebrew” necessitates the same conclusion: “(...) and the ruach/spirit of elohim was moving over/trembling over/grew soft over/relaxed over the face of the waters.”]

[For corroboration and a consideration of the validity of Kulluka Bhatta's gloss, see Horace Wilson's edition of the *Vishnu Purana*, Ch. IV:

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/vishnu-purana-wilson/d/doc115939.html>

It should be noted, however, that there is some disagreement among translators as regards the exact meaning of “ayana” – some claiming that it ought to be rendered as “place of abiding”.]

**11.** From that which is [a surprisingly “Platonic” expression], the first cause, not



the object of sense, existing *everywhere in substance*, not existing *to our perception*, without beginning or end,

(p. 2)

was produced **the divine male**, famed in all worlds under the appellation of **Brahma**.

**12.** In that [metaphorical, sunlike] egg [of light] the great power sat inactive a whole year *of the Creator* [a “Year of Brahma”, supposedly 3.1104 trillion ordinary years], at the close of which, **by his thought alone, he caused the egg** [the glorious spiritual sun; the Hiranyagarbha of the Rig Veda hymn/suktam of the same name] **to divide itself** [note how this statement would seem to imply a rather surprising amount of knowledge of the process of biological procreation];

**13.** And **from its two divisions he framed the heaven** *above* **and the earth** *beneath* [c.f. Genesis 1:1; another striking parallel]: in the midst he placed the subtile ether [or akasha], the eight regions, and the permanent receptacle of waters.

**14.** **From the supreme soul he drew forth Mind**, existing substantially though unperceived by sense, immaterial; **and before mind** *or the reasoning power, he produced consciousness, the internal monitor, the ruler;*

**15.** **And, before them both** [before consciousness and mind], **he produced the great principle of the soul, or first expansion of the divine idea** [the golden, sun-like “egg” mentioned above, into which the Supreme Deity expanded himself as Brahma]; **and all vital forms endowed** [orig: endued] **with the three qualities** *of goodness* [sattva], *passion* [rajas], *and darkness* [tamas]; and the

*five* perceptions of sense and the five organs of sensation.

Comment: Consider the three major parts of the human being (consisting of five lesser parts in total) set forth by Socrates in Plato's *Politeia*; they are exceedingly similar.

*If* this is indeed the origin of the first creation narrative in Genesis (a hypothesis which is little more than a guess at this point), it is interesting to observe how the editors of Genesis have removed most of the more specific metaphysical and psychological statements seen here, in verse 1:14 and 1:15. Generally speaking, it seems that in the case of the Book of Genesis, almost all the more profound teachings were hidden from view, so to speak, either by way of Gematria, or by the moving of them into the body of work which eventually resulted in the Zohar.

**16. Thus**, having at once pervaded, with emanations from the Supreme Spirit, the minutest portions of six principles immensely operative, *consciousness and the five perceptions*, **He framed all creatures**;

Comment: Interesting glosses:

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/manusmriti-with-the-commentary-of-medhatithi/d/doc145414.html>

But do note that the Medhatithi commentary is the one Sir William Jones says was viewed as “prolix and unequal”.

**17.** And since the minutest particles of visible nature have a dependence on those six emanations from God, the wise have accordingly given the name of sarira *or depending on six, that is, the ten organs on consciousness, and the five elements on as many perceptions*, to His *image or appearance* in visible nature;

**18.** Thence proceed the great elements, endowed [orig: endued] with peculiar powers, and **Mind** [probably Mahat or “Intellect” in the Sanskrit] **with operations infinitely subtle, the unperishable cause of all apparent**

**forms.**

**19.** This *universe*, therefore, is compacted from the minute portions of **those seven divine and active principles**,

**(p. 3)**

[1] *the great Soul, or first emanation*, [2] *consciousness*, and [3] *five perceptions*; a mutable *universe* from immutable *ideas*. [C.f. the crucial Platonic distinction between Being and Becoming/Genesis/Generation. This way of thinking is probably far more ancient than any “Platonism”, however.]

**20.** Among them each succeeding element acquires the quality of the preceding; and, in as many degrees as each of them is advanced, with so many properties is it said to be endowed [orig: endued].

**21.** He [Brahma] too first assigned to all creatures distinct names, distinct acts, and distinct occupations; as they had been revealed in the pre-existing Veda

Comment: C.f. Genesis 2:19, where “Adam” (actually ha adam, the adam, the man, in the Hebrew text) names the creatures brought to him.

Note how the Veda is here conceived of as an otherworldly, divine pattern or prototype or archetype, preceding the world of appearances, in much the same way as Episteme is superior to Doxa, and the Ideas of Higher Being transcend their Manifestations in Higher Becoming, in the schema known to us today as Platonism.

That two completely separate and unrelated traditions would both explicitly make the exceedingly curious claim that there was **a naming of each type of**

**creature** during the process of creation, seems highly unlikely, and I would consider correspondences such as this one, along with the statements on a divine spirit moving over the waters and a first light out of darkness, etc., strong indications of a link between the “Hebrew” and the Vedic narratives.

**22.** He, the supreme Ruler, created an assemblage of inferior Deities, with divine attributes and pure souls; and a number of Genii exquisitely delicate; and he prescribed the sacrifice ordained from the beginning.

**23.** From fire [Agni], from air [Vayu], and from the sun [Ravi] he milked out *as it were*, the three primordial Vedas, named Rig, Yajur and Sama, for the due performance of the sacrifice.

Comment: The name of Ravi would seem to have been preserved in the Norwegian language, which uses the term “rav” to refer to the golden or yellow or orange “stones” often found on the beaches of the Baltic sea, and which have traditionally often been used to make pearls for necklaces and the like. “Rav” is certainly sunlike, and that can hardly be a coincidence – the term is almost certainly a cognate of the Sanskrit one. As for the mention of the Vedas, it is interesting that the so-called Atharva Veda is never so much as mentioned in the Manava Dharma Shastra, nor in Kulluka Bhatta's insightful gloss. This may indicate that the Lawbook itself was in fact composed before “the fourth Veda” came into existence, or that neither the compiler of the Lawbook nor Bhatta had any high regard for it.

C.f.: <https://www.wisdomlib.org/definition/ravi>

**24.** He gave being to time and the divisions of time, to the stars also, and to the planets, to rivers, oceans, and mountains, to level plains, and uneven valleys.

Comment: The Ganganatha Jha translation has “Lunar Mansions” instead of

“stars”, but Medhatithi’s commentary seems to acknowledge that stars like the Pleiades and Aldebaran are meant – “lunar mansion” being a term for a segment of the ecliptic. C.f. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lunar\\_station](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lunar_station)]

**25.** To devotion, speech, complacency, desire, and wrath, and to the creation, *which shall presently be mentioned*; for He [Brahma] willed the existence of all those created things.

Comment: The Ganganatha Jha translation states that Brahma was “desirous of bringing into existence these creatures”, but “things” agrees better with the foregoing.

**26.** For the sake of distinguishing actions, He made a total difference between right and wrong, and inured [habituated] these sentient creatures to pleasure and pain, *cold and heat*, and other opposite pairs.

Comment: Once again, we discover concepts also playing crucial roles in Platonism.

**27.** With very minute transformable portions, called matras, of the five elements, all this *perceptible world* was composed in fit order;

[Nananda claims that this verse, 1:27, should actually be placed after 1:19.]

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**28.** And in whatever occupation the supreme Lord first employed any vital soul, to that occupation the same soul attaches itself spontaneously, when it receives a new body again and again.

**29.** Whatever quality, noxious or innocent, harsh or mild, unjust or just, false or

true, He conferred on any being at its creation, the same quality enters it *of course* [as a matter of course; inevitably] *on its future births*;

**30.** As the *six* seasons of the year attain respectively their peculiar marks in due time and of their own accord, even so the several acts of each embodied spirit *attend it naturally*.

**31. That the human race might be multiplied, He caused the Brahman, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya, and the Shudra (so named from the scripture, protection, wealth, and labour) to proceed from his mouth, his arm, his thigh, and his foot.**

Comment: The initial idea here – that of a deity wanting human beings to multiply – seems very similar to the one found in Genesis 1:28, 9:1 and 9:7, for example. As for the statement involving various body parts, it should probably be interpreted on an allegorical or mystical level, since other parts of the same text make it perfectly clear that Brahma is not a physical being, but a spiritual one. Readers are strongly encouraged to compare this Vedic schema, consisting of four main classes (the system styled Varna), to the exceedingly similar Platonic schema, which consists of the class of the royal or the monarchical, which also has priestly roles, the class of the best, i.e. the aristocracy, the class of the martial or honor-loving, the class of the gain- and money-loving and the rarely mentioned class of the enslaved.

**32.** Having divided **his own substance**, the mighty Power [Brahma] became half male, half female, *or nature active and passive*; and from that female he [Brahma] produced **Viraj**;

Comment: Compare this to the division giving rise to Heaven and Earth in 1:12 and 1:13 – that and the division spoken of here seem to be two instances of the same type of event. The first, resulting in a heaven and an earth, is the macrocosmic one, while the second, causing the rise of a female principle, is the

microcosmic one. In other words, the Male is associated with Heaven, and the Female with Earth, on several levels.

Note, moreover, how Brahma's act of extracting a “female” out of himself, a “female” with whom Brahma then has the male offspring Viraj (Viraja), is exceedingly similar to the process which gives rise to Eve in Genesis 2:21-22. In *both cases*, a female (or a “female” power) is produced from a part of an already existing male (or “male” power).

**33. Know Me, O most excellent of Brahmans, to be that person, whom the male *power* Viraj, having performed austere devotion, produced by himself; Me, the *secondary* framer of all this *visible world*.**

Comment: Manu, or Svayambhuva Manu, as this first of numerous Manus is also called – the speaker quoted since the beginning of the creation story – is here pausing his narration and stating that he, Manu, is the offspring of the male or active power Viraj (Viraja), who is the offspring of the female or passive power whom Brahma produced from himself.

**34.** It was I [Svayambhuva Manu], who, desirous of giving birth to a race of men, performed very difficult religious duties, and first produced ten Lords [Maha-Rishis] of created beings, eminent in holiness.

**35. Marichi, Atri, Anqiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Prachetas, or Daksha, Vasishtha, Bhrigu, and Narada;**

Comment: The Ganganatha Jha translation renders the Sanskrit of 1:34 and 1:35 as follows:

“The Being desirous of bringing into existence the (various kinds of) created beings, I, at the very outset, performed most arduous austerities and called into

being the ten great sages, the directors of all created things; Marīci, Atri, Aṅgiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Pracetas, Vaśiṣṭha, Bhṛgu and also Nārada.”

For more on these beings and their names, see:

<https://www.hindufaq.com/prajapatis-the-10-sons-of-lord-brahma/>

**36.** They, abundant in glory, produced seven other

**(p. 5)**

Manus, together with deities, and the mansions of deities, and [other] Maharishis, or great Sages, unlimited in power.

Comment: Each Manu reigns, so to speak, for one “Manvantara”, which is a period consisting of 71 Maha-Yugas, or 4,320,000 years *times* 71 (plus a “connection period” – a “sandhya” – equal to one Satya-Yuga, or 1,728,000 years), and there are fourteen such Manvantaras (plus one initial sandhya) in one Day of Brahma (also styled a “Kalpa”), and *Svayambhuva* Manu was the first Manu of the Day of Brahma we are *now* in, and the Manu now holding sway is, it is claimed, the seventh. In other words, the Manu whom the text claims originated the laws in the present treatise is Svayambhuva Manu, while the Manu associated with the Sun, who would seem to correspond to Enoch (“the seventh from ‘Adam’”), is the one we are now under. He is called Vaivasvata Manu or Śrāddhadeva Manu.

**37.** Benevolent genii, and fierce giants, blood-thirsty savages, heavenly quiristers, nymphs and demons, huge serpents and snakes of smaller size, birds of mighty wing, and separate companies of Pitris, or progenitors of mankind;

Comment: The Ganganatha Jha translation has the following: “[They called into



being] also Yakṣas, Rakṣasas, Piśācas, Gandharvas, Apsarases, Asuras, Nāgas, Sarpas, Suparṇas, and the several orders of Pitṛs.” The reason is, as is easily apprehended, that Ganganatha Jha chose not to embark on the project of translating these Sanskrit terms into English.

Why some “creation story” verses have been left out: Verse 38 through 48 enumerates a bewildering array of different plants and animals, all created by the ten lords mentioned in verse 1:35. While interesting, to include all those verses here, in this series of excerpts, would likely draw attention away from the more important features of the creation account.

**41.** Thus was this whole assemblage of stationary and movable bodies framed by those high-minded beings, through the force of their own devotion, and at my [Svayambhuva Manu's] command, with separate actions allotted to each.

Comment: Or “in accordance with their actions” (Sanskrit: yathākarma), according to the Ganganath Jha translation – a statement Medhātithi takes to mean that each new creature was incarnated according to its deeds in previous lives, i.e. lives in earlier Kalpas or Days of Brahma, since Manu is here narrating the commencement of a new such divine “Day”. (One “Day” of Brahma is stated to be no less than 4,320,000,000 years, as already indicated above, and a “Night” of Brahma is of the same rather incomprehensible length. Hence, it is perhaps somewhat understandable that the authors of the Tanakh, according to a theosophical analysis, chose to reduce the number to a mere 4,320 lunar years. Perhaps they ought to have been a little less drastic, though, and to have only reduced the number to 4,320,000 – the length of a Mahayuga.) Source: <https://www.bhagavad-gita.org/Gita/verse-08-17.html>

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**49.** These *animals and vegetables* [all kinds of animals and birds and fishes and reptilians and plants], encircled with multiform darkness, by reason of past actions [Sanskrit: karmahetunā], have internal conscience [Sanskrit: antassañjñā], and are sensible of pleasure and pain. [Antas > Greek: Entos?]

**50.** All transmigrations, recorded *in sacred books*, from the state of Brahma, to that of plants, happen continually in this tremendous world of beings; a world *always* tending to decay.

Comment: That this world is always tending towards “decay” is also the view of Platonism, which posits that this world of manifestation and matter, far from being eternal, is in a constant state of “becoming” or flux (or generation/genesis) – and this is one of the assertions of Platonism which is also an observable, empirical fact, patently and painfully obvious to anyone willing to “cast a cold eye” (as W.B. Yeats once put it) on the world around him, the records of history, the remnants uncovered by archeology and the conclusions of geology.

**51.** He, whose powers are incomprehensible, having thus created both me [Svayambhuva Manu] and this universe, was again absorbed in the supreme Spirit, changing *the time of energy* for *the time of repose*.

**52.** When that Power awakes, (*for, though slumber be not predicable of the sole eternal Mind, infinitely wise and infinitely benevolent, yet it is predicated of Brahma, figuratively, as a general property of life*) then has this world its full expansion; but, when he slumbers with a tranquil spirit, then the whole system fades away.

Comment: But there is a God (or rather an Unknown Supreme Deity) beyond the radiant “egg” or sun into which Brahma is born, as the beginning of this creation account makes clear, and this God would seem to be beyond all Time, and to remain forever unaffected by these cycles or alterations.

As for the Golden Egg, which, as already mentioned, is the Hiranyagarbha of the Rig Veda (hymn 10.121), this could also be rendered as the Golden or Resplendent Embryo or Child, for example – possibilities which, when contemplated in conjunction with the Platonic and the Christian doctrines of the Child or Offspring of the Father, the “Son” who is also the Sun; the True, Spiritual Sun, acquire a brilliance which is truly mesmerizing.

Source: <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/rig-veda-english-translation/doc840003.html>

Apart from this, there is a striking similarity in form and meaning between the Sanskrit *hiranya* and the ancient Greek *ἱερός* (*hieros*), the usual meaning of which is “holy” – and holiness is everywhere associated with gold, and vice versa.

**53.** For, while he reposes, *as it were*, in calm sleep,

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embodied spirits, endowed [orig: endued] with principles of action, depart from their several acts, and the mind itself becomes inert;

Comment: Here, in verse 1:52 and 1:53, the present translation into English, with the gloss of Bhatta, seems to be far superior in terms of both style and clarity to the Ganganath Jha rendering of these verses.

**54.** And when they once are absorbed in that supreme essence [Sanskrit: *mahatmani*], then the divine soul of all beings [Sanskrit: *sarvabhūtātmā*] withdraws his energy, and placidly slumbers;

55. Then too this vital soul *of created bodies*, with all the organs of sense and of action, remains long immersed in *the first idea or* in darkness, and performs not its natural functions, but migrates from its corporeal frame:

56. When, being *again* composed of minute elementary principles, it enters at once into vegetable or animal seed, it then assumes a *new* form.

57. Thus that **immutable Power**, by **waking and reposing alternately**, revivifies and destroys in eternal succession, this whole assemblage of locomotive and immovable creatures.

Comment: The striking concept of Brahma alternately “sleeping” and “waking”, and of there being “Days” and “Nights” of Brahma, may well be the “inspiration” behind the days of creation and the one day of rest found in Genesis. If that should be the case, it must also be said, however, that the authors of Genesis, whoever they were, reduced the incredibly magnificent and almost mind-bogglingly complex Vedic conception of Time to a very straightforward and rather worldly one. Furthermore, the turning of the otherworldly account of Creation into a fairly prosaic one, and one dispensing with more than *ninety percent* of human history (since an exoteric interpretation of the Biblical Genesis makes the world only a few millennia old) – even if we go with the estimates of modern science instead of the ancient Vedic ones – may in fact have been one of the goals of the makers of “Bereshith”, for reasons we will not delve deeply into here. Suffice it to say that a critical study of how Genesis portrays the so-called Watchers (such as that published by the Estonian academic Amar Annus in 2010) – personages who were usually viewed as bringers of civilization and as heroes in older and non-Israelite cultures (in which they were sometimes known as the Abkallu) – demonstrates that there exists in at least parts of Genesis a certain polemical agenda, aiming to radically alter the perception of the history of human kind.

**58.** He [this has to refer to Brahma], having enacted this code of laws, himself taught it fully to me [Manu] in the beginning; afterwards I taught Marichi and the *nine* other holy sages [or lords of created beings].

**59.** This *my son* Bhrigu [another of the ten lords mentioned in 1:35] will repeat the divine code to you without omission; for that sage learned from me to recite the whole of it.

Comment: Bhrigu is not a son of Manu in the ordinary sense, however, since it is stated, as we have seen, that Manu “performed very difficult religious duties”, and that it was this divine act of contemplation and yoga that gave rise to the ten lords, and *not* biological reproduction.

**60.** Bhrigu, great and wise, having thus been appointed by Manu to promulgate (orig: promulge) his laws, addressed all the Rishis with an affectionate mind saying: 'Hear!'

**61.** From this Manu named Swayambhuva [or Svayambhuva], *or 'Sprung from the self-existing'*, came six descendants, other Manus, *or perfectly understanding the scripture*, **each giving birth to a race of his own**, all exalted in dignity, eminent in power;

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**62.** Swarochisha [or Svarochisha], Uttama, Tamasa [or Tapasa], Raivata likewise and Khashusha [or Chakshusha], beaming with glory, and **Vaivaswata [or Vaivasvata], child of the sun** [*“vivasvatsuta” in the Sanskrit, i.e. son of Vivasvat, the Sun*].

**63.** The seven Manus, (*or those first created, who are to be followed by seven more*) of whom Swayambhuva is the chief, have produced and supported this world of moving and stationary beings, each in his own *antara, or the period of his reign*.

**64.** Eighteen nimeshas, *or twinklings of an eye*, are one kashtha; thirty kashthas, one kala; thirty kalas, one muhurta: and just so many muhurtas let mankind consider as the duration of their day and night.

**Comment:** Wikipedia articles are far from always good and impartial sources of information, but this one seems acceptable:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu\\_units\\_of\\_time](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_units_of_time)

See also <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/manusmriti-with-the-commentary-of-medhatithi/d/doc145490.html>

**65.** The sun causes the distribution of day and night, both divine and human; night being *intended* for the repose of *various* beings, and day for their exertion. [This sounds somewhat like Genesis 1:14-19.]

**66.** A month *of mortals* is a day and a night of the Pitris *or patriarchs inhabiting the moon*; and the division *of a month* being into equal halves, the half beginning from the full moon is their day for actions; and that beginning from the new moon is their night for slumber.

**67.** A year *of mortals* is a day and a night of the gods, *or regents of the universe seated round the north pole*; and again their division is this, their day is the northern, and their night the southern course of the sun.

**68.** Learn now the duration of a day and a night of Brahma, and of the several ages which shall be mentioned in order succinctly.

**69.** Sages have given the name of Krita to an age containing four thousand years of the gods; the twilight preceding it consists of as many hundreds, and the twilight following it, of the same number:

Comment: Note the conceptual similarities between this statement and some of those of Genesis: There is a kind of “day”, or rather *age*, in this case the Krita or Satya Yuga, i.e. the Golden Age, of Age of Truth, and this age or “day” is preceded by a “morning”, and succeeded by an “evening”.

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**70.** In the other three *ages* [the Treta (Silver), the Dvapara (Bronze) and the Kali (Iron)], with their twilights preceding and following, are thousands and hundreds diminished by one.

**71.** The divine years, in the four *human* ages just enumerated, being added together, their sum, or twelve thousand, is called the age of the gods:

**72.** And, by reckoning a thousand such divine ages, a day of Brahma may be known; his night also has an equal duration.

**73.** Those persons best know the divisions of the days and nights, who understand that the day of Brahma, which endures to the end of a thousand such ages, gives rise to virtuous exertions; and that his night endures as long as his day.

**74.** At the close of his night, having long reposed, he awakes, and awaking, exerts intellect, *or reproduces the great principle of animation*, whose property it is to exist unperceived by sense:

**75.** Intellect, called into action by his will to create worlds, performs *again* the

work of creation; and thence *first* emerges the subtle (orig: subtil) ether, to which philosophers ascribe the quality of conveying sound;

**76.** From ether, effecting a transmutation in form, springs the pure and potent air, a vehicle of all scent; and air is held endowed [orig: endued] with the quality of touch:

**77.** Then from air, operating a change, rises light *or fire*, making objects visible, dispelling gloom, spreading bright rays; and it is declared to have the quality of figure;

**78.** But from light, a change being effected, comes water with the quality of taste; and from water *is deposited* earth with the quality of smell: such were they created in the beginning.

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**79. The before-mentioned age of the gods, or twelve thousand *of their* years, being multiplied by seventy-one, *constitutes what is here named a Manwantara* [today usually spelled Manvantara], *or the reign of a Manu.***

**80.** There are numberless Manwantaras; creations also and destructions of worlds, innumerable: the Being supremely exalted performs all this, *with as much ease* as if in sport; again and again, *for the sake of conferring happiness.*

**81.** In the Krita age *the Genius of truth* ("satya") and right (dharma), *in the form of a Bull*, stands firm on his four feet; nor does any advantage accrue to men from iniquity;



Comment: Even though it is “only” one of Kulluka Bhatta's glosses, the statement “in the form of a Bull” is a most interesting one, considering the great importance assigned to that exact type of animal in Egyptian religion and symbolism.

**82.** But in the following ages, by reason of unjust gains, he is deprived successively of one foot; and even just emoluments, through the prevalence of theft, falsehood, and fraud, are *gradually* diminished by a fourth part.

**83.** Men, free from disease, attain all sorts of prosperity, and live four hundred years in the Krita age; but, in the Treta and the succeeding ages, their life is lessened gradually by one quarter.

Comment: Where have we seen this concept of a gradually diminishing life span in the past before? Many of us have seen it in the “Biblical” or “Hebrew” Genesis.

**84.** The life of mortals, which is mentioned in the Veda, the rewards of good works, and the powers of embodied spirits, are fruits proportioned among men to the order of the *four* ages.

**85.** Some duties are performed by *good* men in the Krita age; others, in the Treta; some, in the Dvapara; others, in the Kali; in proportion as those ages decrease in length.

**86.** In the Krita the prevailing virtue is declared to be in devotion; in the Treta, divine knowledge; in the Dvapara, holy sages call sacrifice the duty chiefly performed; in the Kali, liberality alone.

Comment: This matches Plato's description of Democracy and Tyranny perfectly, and constitutes a valid reason for correlating “Governments” with Ages, as I

would assert that Plato does – partly outrightly, and partly quietly.

**87.** For the sake of preserving this universe, the Being, supremely glorious, allotted separate duties to those who sprang respectively from his mouth, his arm, his thigh, and his foot.

Comment: Confounding the natural classes leads, in other words, to the destruction of the world. According to Plato, this intermingling of that which ought not to be mingled, led to the demise of the Atlantean Civilization, which is also associated with the wicked Titans.

**88.** To Brahmans [philosopher-priests] he has assigned the duties of reading the Veda, of teaching it, of sacrificing, of assisting others to sacrifice, of giving alms, *if they be rich*, and, *if indigent*, of receiving gifts:

**89.** To defend the people, to give alms, to sacrifice, to read the Veda, to shun the allurements of sensual gratification, are, in a few words, the duties of a Kshatriya [a warrior or guardian]:

**90.** To keep herds of cattle, to bestow largesses, to sacrifice, to read the scripture, to carry on trade, to lend at interest, and to cultivate land are prescribed *or permitted* to a Vaisya [a merchant or lover of gain, in Plato's terms]:

**91.** One principal duty the supreme Ruler assigns to a Sudra; namely, to serve the before-mentioned classes, without depreciating their worth.

**92.** Man is declared purer above the navel; but **the self-creating Power** (“svayambhuva”) declared the purest part of him to be his mouth.

**93.** Since the Brahman sprang from the most excellent part, since he was the

first born, and since he possesses the Veda, he is by right the chief of this whole creation.

**94.** Him [the Brahman or Priest], **the Being, who exists of himself**, produced in the beginning from his own mouth, [so] that, having performed holy rites, he might present clarified butter to the gods, and cakes of rice to the progenitors of mankind, for the preservation of this world.

**95.** What created being then can surpass Him, with whose mouth the gods of the firmament continually

**(p. 12)**

feast on clarified butter, and **the manes of ancestors**, on hallowed cakes?

Comment: Here the praise of the Brahman (or Brahmin) seems a little exaggerated and hyperbolic.

**96.** Of created things, the most excellent are those which are animated; of the animated, those which subsist by intelligence; of the intelligent, mankind; and of men, the sacerdotal class;

**97.** Of priests, those eminent in learning; of the learned, those who know their duty; of those who know it, such as perform it virtuously; and of the virtuous, those who seek beatitude from a perfect acquaintance with scriptural doctrine.

**98.** The very birth of Brahmans is a constant incarnation of Dharma, *God of Justice*; for the Brahman is born to promote justice, and to procure ultimate happiness.

**99.** When a Brahman springs to light, he is born above the world, the chief of all creatures, assigned to guard the treasury of duties, religious and civil.

**100.** Whatever exists in the universe, is all in effect, *though not in form*, the wealth of the Brahman; since the Brahman is entitled to it all by his primogeniture and eminence of birth:

**101.** The Brahman eats but his own food; wears but his own apparel: and bestows but his own in alms: through the benevolence of the Brahman, indeed, other mortals enjoy life.

**102.** To declare the sacerdotal duties, and those of the other classes in due order, the sage Manu, sprung from the self-existing, promulged this code of laws.

**103.** A code which must be studied with extreme care by every learned Brahman, and fully explained to his disciples, but *must be taught* by no other man *of an inferior class*.

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**104.** The Brahman who studies this book, having performed sacred rites, is perpetually free from offence in thought, in word, and in deed;

**105.** He confers purity on his living family, on his ancestors, and on his descendants, **as far as the seventh person**; and He alone deserves to possess this whole earth.

Comment: This verse, 1:105, contains two ideas strangely evocative of two virtually identical ideas in a very different tradition, which is usually viewed by modern scholars as having no connection to India, namely (1) that of actions

affecting descendants down to a later generation, and (2) that of a certain group of people deserving to acquire a type of dominion over the world due to their having a special relationship with a divine being. That other tradition is ancient “Judaism” or, as we prefer to call it, “Israelism”. Consider the following verses, for example:

**Exodus 34:5-7:** “Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.’” (NKJV)

**Numbers 14:18:** “‘The Lord is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.’” (NKJV)

**Psalms 25:12 - 13:** Who is the man that fears the Lord (YHWH)? Him shall He teach in the way He chooses. He himself shall dwell in prosperity, And his descendants shall inherit the earth [some translations have “land”, but the “Hebrew” is suggestive of “earth”, in the sense of the world]. (NKJV)

**Also compare the sentiment or doctrine here expressed to the very similar one in chapter 10:**

**10:64.** Should the tribe sprung from a Brahman, by a Sudra-wife, produce a succession of children by the marriages of its women with other Brahmans, **the low tribe shall be raised to the highest in the seventh generation. (p. 281)**

**106.** This most excellent code produces every thing auspicious; this code increases understanding; this code procures fame and long life; **this code leads to supreme bliss.**

**107.** In this *book* appears the system of law in its full extent, with the good and bad properties of human actions, and the immemorial customs of the four classes.

**108.** Immemorial custom is transcendent law, approved in the sacred scripture, and in the codes of divine legislators: let every man, therefore, of the three principal classes, who has a due reverence for the *supreme spirit which dwells in him*, diligently and constantly observe immemorial custom.

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## **Chapter XI**

### **On Penance and Expiation**

**[Only a few excerpts from this chapter are included in the present abridged edition, since much of its content details procedures and observances of little interest to a European/Western audience, or to those who are not practicing Hindus.]**

**226.** Perpetually must he repeat **the gayatri**, and other pure texts to the best of his knowledge: thus in all penances for absolution from sin, must he vigilantly employ himself.

**227.** By these expiations are **twice-born** men absolved whose offences are publicly known, and are mischievous by their example but for sins not public, the assembly of priests must award them penances, with holy texts and oblations to fire.

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**236. Devotion** is *equal to the performance of all duties: it is divine knowledge in a Brahman*; it is **defence of the people in a Kshatriya**; devotion is *the business of trade and agriculture* in a Vaisya; devotion is dutiful service in a Shudra.

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Comment: The duty of a Brahman is, according to Manu, the devotion of “Divine Knowledge”, which is the rendering into English of the Sanskrit word jnana (jñāna), a term closely related to the Greek term gnosis. (As we can see, the initial “j”-sound of the Sanskrit was, or was transformed into, a “g”-sound in Attic

Greek. In Norwegian, the “g” and the “j” remains almost interchangeable. The word for “goat”, for example, “geit”, is written with a “g”, but pronounced as if that “g” was a “j”-sound.

We may also note, by the way, that this verse reveals that it is the Brahman of the Vedic or Dharmic system, and not the so-called King, who most closely approximates, and should be correlated with, the truly philosophical and kingly or royal individual appearing in Plato's *Politeia* (the “*Republic*”) – an individual who may, under unfavorable external circumstances, choose to or be forced to “mind his own business”, and to avoid politics, but who may also, in a time and in a place where the opportunity for public office and a remodeling of the state presents itself, become a True Monarch in an external sense as well, in addition to his or her being under the rule of the kingly faculty or power, and therefore in a state of Kingship, continually informed by Divine Knowledge or Gnosis or Vidya, as far as his or her inner, psychological life is concerned.)

**237.** Holy sages, with subdued passions, feeding only on fruit, roots, and air, by devotion alone are enabled to survey **the three worlds**, *terrestrial, ethereal, and celestial*, **peopled with animal creatures, locomotive and fixed.**

Comment: Here we may, perhaps, correlate animal creatures with the terrestrial world, moving creatures with the ethereal one, and unchanging creatures with the celestial one. If this be a proposal in accordance with the intention of the author, then we have found another Vedic metaphysical statement more or less in accordance with Platonism, in which the celestial world here spoken of would correspond to the First Creation, that of the Whole beyond time, in the realm of Being. In the Gayatri Mantra, these three worlds or lokas are invoked as “bhur bhuvah svah” – bhu being the earthly plane, bhuvah the aerial or astral plane and svaha the divine plane.

There are actually fourteen “worlds” or lokas or planes in total, however, and the



three just mentioned are only three of those.

There are seven higher worlds or vyahrtis; bhu, bhuvas, svar, mahas, janas, tapas, and satya, and seven lower realms (patala); atala, vitala, sutala, rasaataala, talatala, mahaatala, patala and naraka.

“The vyahrtis were made at the beginning of creation and represent the seven planetary systems (...). Besides denoting the seven worlds, the vyahrtis denote the seven planes of consciousness. The mantras are prayers directed to the elemental forces on the seven planes. These elemental forces are manifestations of the Parabrahman itself.”

“The seven worlds are embodied in the trinity of bhur, bhuvah, and svah. Bhur or bhu represents earth or the physical plane. Bhuvah represents the sky or astral plane. Svah represents heaven or the mental plane. Maharloka represents a higher plane. Janah represents the place of birth, a still higher plane. Tapah represents the mansion of the Blessed, an even higher plane. Satyam represents the abode of truth, the highest plane. It is sometimes said that these vyahrtis (bhur, bhuvah, svah) which appear in the beginning of the Brahma-gayatri represent the sapta rsis (seven great sages) including Visvamitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvaja, Gautama, Atri, Vasistha, and Kasyapa. The seven devatas of this mantra (bhur, bhuvah, and svah) are Agni, Vayu, Aditya, Brhaspati, Varuna, Indra, and Visva Devata. Besides referring to the upper, middle and lower planets (i.e. the complete universe or creation), bhur, bhuvah, svah signify the material body. Sripada Madhvacarya says Om means Lord Visnu, the reservoir of all virtues;

bhu—the perfection of qualities; bhuvah—all power; svah—to His blissful nature. It is also said, 'Thou art the bhu—creator of all beings; bhuvah—the sustainer of all beings; svah—the final goal of all beings.' Bhur, bhuvah, and svah indicate the totality of all levels of existence in the universe, which is the effect of the Supreme cause, the original cause of everything.”

Sources:

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/definition/bhu>

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/definition/vyahriti>

“As you probably know there are not just the seven (upper) lokas you mentioned but also the seven lower ones. And the Gayatri mantra refers to all 14 of them in this way: Bhuh represents both the Earth and all the seven lokas below it, Bhuvah represents only Bhuvah, and Svah represents both Svah and all the four remaining lokas above it. And the reason that the mantra condenses all 14 lokas into three is that in our ordinary lives we are only concerned with those three lokas.”

Source: <https://hinduism.stackexchange.com/questions/4120/gayatri-mantra-and-three-lokas-planes>

**240.** Even sinners in the highest degree, and of course the other offenders, are absolved from guilt by austere devotion well practiced.

**241.** *Souls that* animate worms, and insects, serpents, moths, beasts, birds, and vegetables, attain heaven by the power of devotion.

**242.** Whatever sin has been conceived in the hearts of men, uttered in their speech, or committed in their bodily acts, they speedily burn it all away by devotion, if they preserve devotion as their best wealth.

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**244.** Even **Brahma, lord of crcatures**, by devotion enacted this code of laws; and the sages by devotion acquired a knowledge of the Veda.

**(p. 323)**

Comment: The Sanskrit text has Prajāpati, whose name can be interpreted as “lord of creatures”. The name often refers to Brahma, but not necessarily.

**246.** By reading each day as much as possible of the Veda, by performing the *five* great sacraments, and **by forgiving all injuries**, even sins of the highest degree shall be soon effaced:

**247.** As fire consumes in an instant with his [its] bright flame the wood, that has been placed on it, thus, **with the flame of knowledge**, a Brahman, who understands the Veda, consumes all sin.

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Comment: Here is interesting language indeed. Not only do we find a concept of radical forgiveness, reminiscent of the one often associated with Jesus Christ, but the Veda, and Knowledge, are compared to fire, just as Noesis or Spiritual Sight is in Platonism (c.f. the rekindling of the Eye of the Soul mentioned by Plato, in *Politeia* 527d-527e).

**261.** As the sacrifice of a horse, the king of sacrifices, removes all sin, thus the text aghamarshana destroys all offences.

Comment: Here we probably have, in the surprising importance placed on and the veneration paid to the horse, evidence of a connection to the ancient Indo-European horse culture of the Asian steppes. In Norway, the sacrificing of horses, and the more or less ritual consumption of horse meat (during religious festivities), remained commonplace well into the period of “Christianization”,

around a thousand years ago, even though much of Norway is not that well suited for riding and horsemanship, due to an extremely jagged topography. As for the aghamarshana, it is “a jewel of Mantras appearing in [the] Rig Veda”, which “forms part of [the] Maha Narayana Upanishad” and is “recited during consecration ceremonies”. Source:

<http://ragamalika.pradosham.com/Scripts/Aghamarshana%20Suktam%20Meaning.html>

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**262.** A priest, who should retain in his memory the whole Rigveda, would be absolved from guilt, even if he had slain the inhabitants of the three worlds, and had eaten food from the foulest hands.

**263.** By thrice repeating the mantras and brahmanas of the Rig, or those of the Yajur, or those of the Saman, with the upanishads, he shall perfectly be cleansed from every possible taint:

Comment: The Upanishads are the philosophical treatises in the Vedas, and constitute one of the four types of content in the Vedas, the other three being the Samhitas (the religious hymns), the Brahmanas (liturgical commentaries), and the Aranyakas (expositions aimed at hermits and initiates). While some of the Upanishads, also styled the “concluding” parts of the Vedas, may be of comparatively recent origin, it seems likely that at least some Upanishads have their roots in exceedingly ancient traditions. Hence, the mention of Upanishads should not, by itself, be viewed as indicating that the “Manusmriti” is “only” between 2,000 and 3,000 years old.

**264.** As a clod of earth, cast into a great lake, sinks in it, thus is every sinful act submerged in the triple Veda.

**265.** The divisions of the Rig, the several branches of the Yayur, and the manifold strains of the Saman must be considered as forming the triple Veda: he knows the Veda, who knows them collectively.

Comment: It is interesting that the “Manusmriti”, as it has come down to us, never ever mentions the fourth veda or samhita, namely the Atharvaveda. It might indicate that the contents of the Manava Dharma Shashtra, the “Precepts of Justice for Mankind”, predates the Atharvaveda. If that is the case, the version of the Lawbook of Manu here given is most likely more than three thousand years old.

**266.** The primary triliteral syllable, in which the three Vedas themselves are comprised, must be kept secret, as another triple Veda: he knows the Veda, who *distinctly* knows *the mystic sense of* that word.

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Comment: This is relieving, as it confirms that the Vedic religion does not rely on the Holy Writ of the physical or memorized Vedas alone, and that the substance of the Veda, the Heavenly Knowledge of which the physical or recited records are mere images, may actually be obtained via Mystical Insight or Gnosis as well.

## Chapter XII

## On Transmigration and Final Beatitude

[The final chapter of the Lawbook of Manu, and one containing numerous noble and lofty ideas.]

1. O thou, who art free from sin, *said the devout sages*, thou hast declared the whole system of duties ordained for the four classes of men: explain to us now, from the first principles, the ultimate retribution [or “reward”, a word which can mean both reward in the ordinary sense and punishment, as in Matthew 6:2] for their deeds.

(p. 326)

2. **Bhrigu** [one of the godlike sages of old], whose heart was the pure essence of virtue, **who proceeded from Manu himself**, thus addressed the great sages [commencement of extended alleged quote]:

Hear the infallible rules for *the fruit of* deeds in this universe:

3. **Action, either mental, verbal, or corporeal, bears good or evil fruit, as itself is good or evil**, and from the actions of men proceed their various transmigrations in the highest, the mean, and the lowest degree:

Comment: Compare these with the three major divisions mentioned by Plato in the *Politeia*.

4. Of that three-fold action, connected with bodily functions, disposed in three

classes, and consisting of ten orders, be it known in this world, that the heart is the instigator.

**5.** Devising means to appropriate the wealth of other men, resolving on any forbidden deed, and **conceiving notions of atheism or materialism** [abhinivesha], are the three bad acts of mind:

Comment: This prohibition on Atheism and Materialism is one which would not be out of place in our day and age, and which would have formed a very helpful addition to the Ten Commandments of Moses (or Ezra). Abhiniveśa could also be translated as “instinctive clinging to worldly life and bodily enjoyments, and the fear of death”.

Source: <https://www.wisdomlib.org/definition/abhinivesa>

The Ganganatha Jha is extremely cautious, and has “adhering to a wrong notion”.

On the whole, Sir William Jones' translation from more than two hundred years ago seems vastly superior to the Ganganatha Jha in this case *as well*, however.

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**8. A rational creature** has a reward or a punishment for mental acts, in his mind; for verbal acts, in his organs of speech; for corporeal acts, in his bodily frame.

**9.** For sinful acts *mostly* corporeal, a man shall assume *after death* a vegetable or mineral form; for such acts *mostly* verbal, the form of a bird or a beast; for acts *mostly* mental, the lowest of human conditions:

Comment: A summary of the Vedic doctrine of reincarnation / transmigration / metempsychosis / gilgul neshamot (the term for reincarnation in Jewish

esotericism)

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**10.** He, whose firm understanding obtains a command over his words, a command over his thoughts, and a command over his whole body, may justly be called a tridandi, *or triple commander: not a mere anchoret, who bears three visible staves.*

Comment: This could be compared to Plato's doctrine of Inner Kingship – a psychological state of “Justice”, or Harmony and Wholeness, which is realized when all the various parts of an incarnated human being (the immaterial faculties or powers that are the Eye of the Soul, the Reason or Understanding, the Will, the Necessary Desires and the Unnecessary Desires) are carrying out their proper tasks, and the higher have obtained control of the lower, so that the potentially destructive ones are in a state of subjection to and of being guided by the good and kingly and divine ones. The questions of how such an inner state of command of oneself might be acquired, and why it is desirable, and a necessary prerequisite for those wishing to rule an outer city justly, and how it is that both Inner and Outer Kingship tend to gradually degenerate into other forms of “government”, are in fact some of the foremost issues treated of by Plato in his misnamed and often misconstrued “Republic”.

**11.** The man, who exerts **this triple self-command** with respect to **all animated creatures**, wholly subduing both lust and wrath, shall by those means attain **beatitude**.

**12.** That substance, which gives a power of motion to the body, the wise call Kshetrajnya, *or jivatman*, the vital spirit; and that body, which thence derives active functions, they name bhutatman, *or composed of elements*:

Explanatory note:



Sloka two of Chapter XIII of the Bhagavad Gita, part of the Mahabharata, the epic poem, has this to say of the two entities styled the Kshetra and the Kshetrajnya:

“O Kaunteya, this body is said to be the Field (Kshetra). The one who knows about this (body), he is known as the 'Knower of the Field' (Kshetrajnya).”

“Kshetra means Field, the land that is tilled. Just like the Field aiding the proper growth of the seeds planted therein, the body too aids the development of the seeds of Knowledge. So the body acts in the same way as the Field, hence the Kshetra or the Field is said to be the body. The one who knows the Field/Kshetra, or the body, is said to be the Kshetrajnya, the Knower of the Field. The Knower of the body is none other than the indwelling Atma or Self.”

It seems that there is no connection between these two terms, “Kshetra” and “Kshetrajnya”, and the two of “Kshatra” (power, dominion) and “Kshatriya” (the martial or honor-loving varna or class).

Sources:

Bhagavad Gita, Chapter XIII: <http://www.kasarabada.org/Bhagavadgita%2013%20MED.html>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Bhagavadgita>

“Paramatma is like ocean, atma is like water, jiva is like sponge, and jivatma is just a name for the water inside the sponge. Paramatma is soul of souls, Atma is soul (but universal and only one), jiva is the feeling of being just a part, and jivatma is the portion of universal soul which is felt inside that jiva.” Source: <https://hinduism.stackexchange.com/questions/6689/what-is-difference-between-aatma-jeevatma-and-paramatma>

**13.** Another internal spirit, *called mahat, or the great soul*, attends the birth of all creatures imbodyed [or embodied], and thence in all mortal forms is conveyed a perception either pleasing or painful.

Comment: Here the various translations seem to diverge greatly from one another:

“An inner ‘self,’ called ‘Jīva,’ ‘Soul,’ is different, – generated along with all embodied beings, through which one experiences pleasure and pain during the several births.” (Ganganatha Jha)

The Sanskrit seems to be as follows: jīvasañjño'ntarātmā'nyaḥ sahajaḥ  
sarvadehinām  
yena vedayate sarvaṃ sukhaṃ duḥkhaṃ ca janmasu

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**14. Those two, the vital spirit and reasonable soul** [c.f. verse 12:12 and 12:13], are closely united with **five elements**, but connected with **the supreme spirit, or divine essence**, which pervades **all beings high and low**:

**15.** From the substance of **that supreme spirit** are diffused, *like sparks from fire*, innumerable vital spirits, which perpetually give motion to creatures exalted and base.

Medhatithi's commentary:

These two are said to ‘subsist’ in the Supreme Self, because the entire Universe subsists in It; every effect subsists in its cause; and it is on the basis of this that these two are said to ‘subsist’ in the Supreme Self. Says the revered Vyasa – ‘In this world there are two Purushas, the Perishable and the Imperishable; the Perishable one consists of all material substances, and the unchangeable entity is

called 'Imperishable,' – Here the term 'perishable' stands for the entire phenomenal world; and 'imperishable' for the Original Cause, which is also spoken of as 'Unchanging,' as in its causal form, it does not perish even at Universal Dissolution. Or 'perishable' may stand for the Body, and 'imperishable' for the 'Conscious Being' (Kshetrajna); the latter being called 'Unchangeable,' because till Final Liberation is attained, he retains his character of being the doer (of acts) and experiencer (of results). (Vyāsa goes on) – 'The Highest Purusha is different from these two, and is called the Supreme Self, who, being the infallible Lord, who pervades and sustains the three worlds' (Bhagavadgita, 15.16.17).

Source: <https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/book/manusmriti-with-the-commentary-of-medhatithi/d/doc202192.html>

**16.** By the vital souls of those men, who have committed sins *in the body reduced to ashes*, another body, composed of *nerves with* five sensations, in order to be susceptible of torment, shall certainly be assumed after death;

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**17.** And, being intimately united with those minute nervous particles, according to their distribution, they shall feel, in that new body, the pangs indicted in each case by the sentence of Yama.

Comment: Note how the wages of sin are not meted out in a separate "Hell" after the death of the physical body, but are "rewarded" by way of incarnation into yet another physical body, in accordance with the decrees of the deity Yama, who is often depicted as a god of Death and the Underworld. Hence, "Hell" (as Westerners would call it) is not thought of as a separate realm here, probably, but as this present, material world of ours, and the people undergoing

punishment for their sins in former incarnations could very appropriately be said to be “imprisoned in” or “entombed in” their bodies – which is how Plato tends to view embodiment (a view which is a little too negative, we would say).

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**18.** When the vital soul has gathered the fruit of sins, which arise from a love of sensual pleasure, but must produce misery, and, when its taint has thus been removed, it approaches again those two most effulgent essences [mentioned above], *the intellectual soul and the divine spirit*:

Comment: If the text in Italics is indeed Kulluka Bhatta's gloss, then the Vedism of his time must **either** have been surprisingly similar to Platonism (most likely due to both having been derived from the same Indo-European roots), **or** have been very heavily influenced by it.

**(p. 329)**

**20.** If **the vital spirit** had practised virtue [dharma] for the most part, and vice in a small degree, it enjoys delight in **celestial abodes** [svarga, a “heavenly” plane, but not the highest of such], clothed with a body formed of **pure elementary particles**;

**21.** But, if it had generally been addicted to vice, and seldom attended to virtue, then shall it be deserted by those pure elements, and, *having a coarser body of sensible nerves*, **it feels the pains to which Yama** [a lesser god; a god of death; in certain respects resembling Adam] **shall doom it**.

**22.** Having endured those torments according to the sentence of Yama, and its

taint being almost removed, it again reaches those five pure elements in the order of their natural distribution.

**23.** Let each man, considering with his intellectual power these migrations of the soul according to its virtue or vice, into a region of bliss or pain, continually fix his heart on virtue.

**24.** Be it known, that the three qualities (“gunas”) of the rational soul are a tendency to goodness (“sattva”), to passion (“rajas”), and to darkness (“tamas”); and, endowed [orig: endued] with one or more of them, it remains incessantly attached to all these created substances. [**Note:** There are no capital letters in the original Sanskrit.]

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**25. When any one of the *three* qualities predominates in a mortal frame,** it renders the embodied [orig: imbodyed] spirit eminently distinguished for that quality.

Comment: Just as in Platonism, one's naturally dominant power or faculty or part determines both one's inner state and one's position in society. The guna of Sattva could be viewed as corresponding to Kingship and Aristocracy in Platonism, and to Knowledge and Understanding, the guna of Rajas to Timocracy, and to the martial and honor-loving part and the Will, and the guna of Tamas to Oligarchy and Democracy and Tyranny, and to the money- and gain-loving part, the Necessary and Unnecessary Desires, and to Ignorance.

**26. Goodness** (“sattva”) **is declared to be true knowledge** (“jñāna”; in Plato gnosis); **darkness** (“tamas”), **gross ignorance** (“ajñāna”; in Plato agnosia); passion (“rajas”), an emotion of desire or aversion: such is the compendious

description of those qualities, which attend all souls.

**27. When a man perceives in the reasonable soul a disposition tending to virtuous love, unclouded with any malignant passion, clear as the purest light, let him recognise it as the quality of goodness;**

**28.** A temper of mind, which gives uneasiness and produces disaffection, let him consider as the adverse **quality of passion, ever agitating** embodied (orig: imbodyed) spirits.

**29.** That indistinct, inconceivable, unaccountable disposition of a mind naturally sensual, and clouded with infatuation, let him know to be the quality of darkness.

Comment: The quality of goodness defined, and contrasted with badness – goodness is Divine Knowledge, clear as the purest light, and attended by unselfish love, while badness is gross ignorance, characterized by a lack of clarity, a preoccupation with sense impressions, and a selfish infatuation.

**30.** Now will I declare at large the various acts [mental, vocal and physical], in **the highest, middle, and lowest** degrees, which proceed from **those three dispositions of mind**.

**31.** Study of scripture, austere devotion, **sacred knowledge** (“jñāna”), corporeal purity, command over the organs, performances of duties (“dharmakriyā”), and **meditation on the divine spirit**, accompany **the good quality** of the soul;

**32.** Interested motives for acts *of religion or morality*, **perturbation of mind on slight occasions**, commission of acts forbidden by law, and habitual indulgence in **selfish gratifications**, are attendant on **the quality of passion**:

(p. 330)

**33. Covetousness**, indolence, **avarice**, detraction, **atheism**, omission of prescribed acts, a habit of soliciting favours, and inattention to necessary business, belong to **the dark quality**.

**(pp. 330-331)**

**34.** Of **those three qualities**, as they appear in **the three times, past, present, and future**, the following in order from the lowest may be considered as a short but certain criterion.

**35.** Let the wise consider, as belonging to the quality of **darkness**, every act, which a man is **ashamed** of having done, of doing, or of going to do.

**36.** Let them consider, as proceeding from the quality of **passion**, every act, by which a man seeks **exaltation and celebrity in this world**, though he may not be much afflicted, if he fail of attaining his object.

**37.** To the quality of **goodness** belongs every act, by which he hopes to acquire **divine knowledge**, which, he is **never ashamed** of doing, and which brings **placid [tranquil] joy** to his conscience.

Comment: *Three* parts, arranged in a *hierarchy* – precisely as in Platonism. We would urge the inquiring reader to compare this schema of goodness, passion and darkness to that of the three main parts of an incarnated human being outlined by Plato in the *Politeia* – the kingly and aristocratic, associated with Divine Knowledge and Reason, the martial or honor-loving, associated with the will, and the gain-loving, associated with the necessary and unnecessary desires.

**(p. 331)**

### [On Transmigration or Reincarnation or Metempsychosis:]

**38.** Of **the dark quality**, as described, the principal object is [bodily] **pleasure**; of **the passionate, worldly prosperity**; but of **the good quality**, the chief object is **virtue**; the last mentioned *objects* are superior in dignity.

**39.** Such **transmigrations**, as the soul procures in this universe by each of those qualities, I now will declare in order succinctly.

**40.** Souls, endowed [orig: endued] with **goodness**, attain always the state of **deities** [a concept in accordance with Plato, who states that True Philosophers become deified, insofar as that is possible for human beings]; those filled with **ambitious passions**, the condition of **men**; and those immersed in **darkness**, the nature of **beasts**; this is the triple order of transmigration.

(p. 331)

**43.** Elephants, horses, men of the servile class, and contemptible **Mlech'has**, *or barbarians*, lions, tigers, and boars, are the mean states procured by the quality of darkness (Tamas):

**Comment:** The term “**Mlech'ha**” is not a Sanskrit or even an Indo-European term, a fact which indicates that it was borrowed from the language of the unknown group in question. Also compare the information given here, in verse 12:43, to that set forth in chapter 10:

**10:45.** All those tribes of men, who sprang from the mouth, the arm, the thigh, and the foot of Brahma, but who became outcasts by having neglected their duties, are called Dasyus, or plunderers, whether they



speak **the language of Mlech'has, or that of Aryas.**

Comment: Here is another example of a case in which the William Jones rendering of a “Manusmriti” verse is clearly better and more accurate than the translation carried out by Ganganath Jha – for while the latter chooses to be suffocatingly “politically correct” or evasive, and to conceal the presence of the terms “mlecca” and “arya” in the Sanskrit text, by using the terms “barbaric” and “refined” – terms which are clearly imprecise and misleading, since the original author of the text certainly has two very different language groups and ethnic groups in mind – the former allows the reader to see the terms which are in fact employed in the Sanskrit witnesses. Yes, the term “Mlech'ha” might mean “barbarian”, perhaps, and “arya” could indeed have connotations like “refined” (or “noble”), but the term “Mlech'ha” is a word of non-Indo-European origin, possibly reflecting a similar term used by the group in question to describe themselves, and cannot be convincingly construed as a term denoting a language or a kind of speech only – as verse 12:43 indeed confirms.

Here is what the Encyclopedia Britannica has to say of the subject:

Mlechchha, also spelled mlecca [or simply mlecca], [a] people of foreign extraction in ancient India. A Sanskrit term, mlechchha [sic], was used by the Vedic peoples much as the ancient Greeks used barbaros [this equating of terms does not seem that well-founded], originally to indicate the uncouth and incomprehensible speech of foreigners and then extended to their unfamiliar behaviour. Mlechchhas were found in northwestern India, and there is reason to believe that the people known in Akkadian as Mlakkha were the original mlechchhas. [For this statement, no source is provided.] (Emphasis added)

For more on the mysterious Mlech'has, see:

<https://www.wisdomlib.org/hinduism/compilation/puranic-encyclopaedia/d/>

**44.** Dancers and singers, birds, and deceitful men, giants and blood-thirsty savages, are the highest conditions, to which the dark quality can ascend.

**46. Kings**, men of **the fighting class**, domestic priests of kings, and men skilled in the war of controversy, are **the middle states** caused by the quality of **passion**:

Comment: The king is placed in the middle, in the class of the passion-dominated, not at the top. Moreover, take note of the fact that each of the three gunas or qualities is viewed as having three subdivisions, or a low, a middle and a high version.

**(p. 332)**

**50.** Brahma with four faces, creators of worlds *under him, as Marichi and others*, the genius of virtue, the divinities presiding over (*two principles of nature in the philosophy of Kapila*) mahat, *or the mighty*, and avyakta, *or unperceived*, are the highest conditions, to which, by the good quality ("sattva"), souls are exalted.

**51. This triple system of transmigrations, in which each class has three orders, according to actions of three kinds**, and which comprises all animated beings, has been revealed in its full extent.

**(p. 333)**

**[Verse 52 through 81 detail the punishments or retributions for various sins, and are not included in this edition, since they say very little of the topics that are of the greatest interest to the Western reader we have in**

**mind, namely those of metaphysics, cosmology and anthropology.]**

**82.** Thus has been revealed to you the system of punishments for evil deeds: next learn those acts of a Brahman, which lead to eternal bliss.

**83.** Studying and comprehending the Veda, practicing pious austerities, acquiring divine knowledge *of law and philosophy*, command over the organs of sense and action, **avoiding all injury to sentient creatures** [what a contrast to some of the other worldviews found on this planet], and showing reverence to a *natural and spiritual* father, are the chief branches of duty which ensure final happiness.

**84.** Among all those good acts performed in this world, *said the sages*, is no single act held more powerful than the rest in leading men to beatitude (shreyaskaratara)?

**85.** Of all those duties, *answered Bhrigu*, the principal is **to acquire from the Upanishads a true knowledge of one supreme GOD** (sharvasamapi); that is the most exalted of all sciences, because it ensures immortality (sharvavidya):

Comment: Sharva seems to be one of the names of the Great Whole, or the knowable aspect of the Supreme Deity. See also note regarding this term by the editor of the printed edition.

**86.** In this life, indeed, as well as the next, the study of the Veda, *to acquire a knowledge of GOD*, is held the most efficacious of those six duties in procuring felicity to man;

**(p. 337)**

**87. For in the knowledge and adoration of one GOD, which the Veda teaches**, all the rules of good conduct, *before-mentioned* in order, are fully

comprised. [There are no capital letters in the Sanskrit, so Sir William Jones, or one of the editors, have probably taken some liberties here.]

Comment: Compare this to the following startling proposition made by Socrates in Plato's "Republic" regarding the Idea of the Good: "The greatest study" (or "the greatest science") (504d-505a) is the Idea of the Good ("ἐπεὶ ὅτι γε ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἰδέα **μέγιστον μάθημα**", 505a, emphasis added).

**88.** The ceremonial duty, prescribed by the Veda, is of two kinds; one connected with this world, and causing prosperity on earth; the other abstracted from it, and procuring bliss in heaven.

**89.** A religious act, proceeding from selfish views in this world, *as a sacrifice for rain*, or in the next, *as a pious oblation in hope of a future reward*, is declared to be concrete and interested; but an act performed with a knowledge of God, and without self-love, is called abstract and disinterested.

**90.** He, who *frequently* performs interested rites, attains an equal station with the regents of the lower heaven; but he, who *frequently* performs disinterested acts of religion, becomes for ever exempt from *a body composed of* the five elements;

**91.** Equally perceiving **the supreme soul** in all beings and all beings in the supreme soul, **he sacrifices his own spirit** *by fixing it on the spirit of GOD*, and **approaches the nature of that sole divinity** *who shines by his own effulgence*.

Comment: Here the William Jones' translation with Kulluka Bhatta's gloss once again differs dramatically from the Ganganatha Jha translation, the former interpreting the verse in question as referring to, on the one hand, a Supreme Being, and, on the other, a self distinct from that Supreme Being, and the latter

choosing to read the verse as referring only to a “Self”, and rejecting the concept of a Being or Spirit distinct from that “Self”, it seems.

These two and theologically very different ways of understanding the text recur throughout the two translations – the William Jones' and Kulluka Bhatta's version consistently refer to the glory and greatness of a Supreme Deity, while the Ganganatha Jha version always view the same passages as speaking of the “Self”, albeit a Higher and “Divine” and All-Pervading “Self” is meant, it seems.

This does of course raise the question of why the translations and glosses differ so significantly when it comes to theologically crucial verses, and the differences between the Dvaita and Advaita schools of philosophy come to mind as a possible explanation.

**92.** Thus must the chief of **the twice-born** (dvijottamah), though he neglect the ceremonial rites mentioned in the Shastras, be diligent alike in attaining a knowledge of God and in repeating the Veda.

Comment: For more on the concept of the twice-born or “born-again”, see:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/dvija>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/upanayana>

**93.** Such is the advantageous privilege of those who have **a double birth** *from their natural mothers and from the gayatri, their spiritual mother*, especially of a brahman; since **the twice-born** (dvijo) **man**, by performing this duty, but not otherwise, may soon acquire endless felicity.

Comment: The term here rendered as “twice” is clearly the “dvi” of the Sanskrit. Interestingly, the Norwegian language has preserved the cognate adjective “tvi”, which is virtually identical to the Sanskrit term, except for the fact that the initial consonant is spoken as hard instead of soft – as is evidenced by the meaning

being identical as well – “tvi” simply meaning “two” or “dual”, as in “tvisynt”, “dual-sighted”.

**Also compare the information given here, in verse 12:93, to that set forth in chapter 10:**

**10:4.** The three twice-born classes are the sacerdotal, the military, and the commercial; but the fourth, or servile, is once-born, *that is, has no second hirth from the gayatri*, and wears no thread: nor is there a fifth pure class.  
**(p. 274)**

**(p. 338)**

**94.** To patriarchs, to deities, and to mankind (pitridevamanusyanam), the scripture is **an eye giving constant light**; nor could the Veda-Shastra have been made by **human faculties**; nor can it be measured by **human reason** *unassisted by revealed glosses and comments*: this is a sure proposition.

**95.** Such codes of law as are not grounded on the Veda, and the various heterodox theories of men, produce **no good fruit** after death; for they all are declared to have their basis on **darkness** [or ignorance].

**97.** The three worlds, the four classes of men, and their four distinct orders [the Varna system], with all that has been, all that is, and all that will be, are made known by the Veda:

**98.** The nature of sound, of *tangible and visible* shape, of taste, and of odour, the fifth *object of sense*, is clearly explained in the Veda alone, together with the three qualities of mind, the births attended with them, and the acts which they occasion.

**100.** Command of armies, **royal authority**, power of inflicting punishment, and

**sovereign dominion** over all nations, he only well deserves, **who perfectly understands the Veda-Shastra** (vedashastravidarhati).

**101.** As fire with augmented force burns up even humid trees, **thus he, who well knows the Veda, burns out the taint of sin**, which has infected his soul.

**(p. 339)**

**102.** He, who completely knows the sense of the Veda-Shastra, while he remains in any one of the four orders, approaches the divine nature (brahmabhuyaya), even though he sojourn in this low world.

**103.** They who have read many books, are more exalted than such as have seldom studied; they who retain what they have read, than forgetful readers; they who fully understand, than such as only remember; and they who perform their known duty, than such men as barely know it.

**104.** Devotion and sacred knowledge (vidya) are the best means by which a Brahman can arrive at beatitude; by devotion he may destroy guilt; by sacred knowledge he may acquire immortal glory.

**(p. 340)**

**111.** The assembly of ten under a chief, *either the king himself or a judge appointed by him*, must consist of three, each of them peculiarly conversant with one of the three Vedas, *of a fourth skilled in the Nyaya, and a fifth in the Mimansa philosophy*; of a sixth, who has particularly studied the Nirukta; a seventh, who has applied himself most assiduously to the Dharma-shastra [the present work; the “Manusmriti”]; and of three *universal scholars*, who are in the three first orders.

Comment: The “Nirukta” is one of six Vedangas, so-called, and deals with the etymology and proper interpretation of Sanskrit words found in the Vedas. A Wiki entry for the term Nirukta states that “A critical edition of the Nighantu and the Nirukta was published by Lakshman Sarup in the 1920s. The critical edition by Lakshman Sarup places it between 700 and 500 BCE, i.e., before Gautama Buddha.” If this assessment of the age of the Nirukta be correct, we have made a very significant discovery, since the mentioning of that ancient Vedanga here, in verse 12.111 of the *Manava Dharma Shastra*, would then necessitate the conclusion that this part of Manu's “Ordinances”, at least, is more than 2,500 years old, and likely more than 2,700 years old, since it is extremely improbable that the author or authors of a prominent tract of law like this one would have chosen to mention a text only recently composed, since such a text would probably have acquired no significant standing. By itself, the mention of the Nirukta is inconclusive, of course, since Sarup's dating is disputed, but when seen in conjunction with the reference to the ancient Saraswati river, which disappeared millennia ago, but the huge riverbed of which has been discovered on modern satellite images, the possibility that large swathes of the *Institutes of Manu* are some 4,000 years old does certainly present itself, even to a skeptical and non-Indian reader. As for the name Mimansa, or Mimamsa, mentioned in the gloss, it refers to a philosophy or darshana founded by the great sage or maharishi Jaimini.

“Devotional India” says this of him: “The name of Maharishi Jaimini is held in high esteem and reverence among the Sanskrit writers of eminence and probably he is held only next to Maharishi Vedavyasa. Jaimini is the disciple of Vyasa, and besides being a writer of various treatises and the Epic Jaimini Bharata, he is the famous author of Poorva Mimamsa Sastra, and these able aphorisms in Astrology called after his name as the Jaimini-sutras. The Maharishis, so far as their intellectual development was, concerned, stood altogether on a unique pedestal unapproached by any other authors in the world. They expanded their intellects



not by ordinary study, patient labour and devotion but by the mystic processes of Yoga. Thus expanding their mental vision by a peculiar process still unknown to the greatest scholars of the present day, they were able to grasp the causes and effects of the celestial and terrestrial phenomena with the greatest ease and on a scale of understanding and comprehension of facts at which the present generations stand surprised and wonderstruck.”

Source:

<https://www.devotionalindia.com/Vedas/download/downloadvedaspdf/Sacred%20Texts/Jaimini%20Sutras.pdf>

Nyaya is a school of Vedic philosophy, advocating a type of epistemology exceedingly similar to that of Platonism.

**112.** One, who has chiefly studied the Rig Veda, a second, who principally knows the Yajur, and a third best acquainted with the Saman, are the assembly of three under a head, who may remove all doubts both in law and casuistry.

**(p. 341)**

**117.** Thus did the all-wise Manu, who possesses extensive dominion, and blazes with heavenly splendour, disclose to me [Bhrigu], from his benevolence to mankind, this transcendent system of law, **which must be kept devoutly concealed** *from persons unfit to receive it.*

**118.** Let every Brahman with fixed attention consider all nature, both visible and invisible, as existing in the divine spirit; for, **when he contemplates the boundless universe existing in the divine spirit, he cannot give his heart to iniquity:**

**119.** The divine spirit alone is the whole assemblage of gods; all worlds are seated in the divine spirit; and the divine spirit no doubt produces, *by a chain of*

*causes and effects consistent with freewill*, the connected series of acts performed by embodied [orig: imbodyed] souls.

(p. 342)

122. But he must consider **the supreme omnipotent intelligence as the sovereign lord of them all**, *by whose energy alone they exist*; a spirit, *by no means the object of any sense*, which **can only be conceived by a mind wholly abstracted from matter**, and *as it were slumbering*; but which, *for the purpose of assisting his meditation*, he may imagine more subtle [orig: subtile] than the finest conceivable essence, and **more bright than the purest gold**. [Emphasis and color added]

Comment:

According to this rendition of verse 12.122, which is vastly superior to the Ganganath Jha translation in terms of eloquence, and perhaps in terms of faithfulness to the intent of the Sanskrit author as well, the Supreme Lord is an omnipotent intelligence, on which all created beings depend. Metaphorically, and for the sake of assisting human contemplation, that Supreme God may be thought of as more rarefied than any essence, and brighter than any gold.

Compare this to the following statement made by Plato in his *Laws*, in 875c-875d:

**Plato, *Laws*, 875c-875d, according to the Benjamin Jowett translation:**

**“For if a man were born so divinely gifted that he could naturally apprehend the truth**, he would have no need of laws to rule over him; for **there is no law or order which is above knowledge** [this will seem a strange

statement unless one understands that Plato has Episteme, or Divine, Truly Objective and Flawless Knowledge, obtained by way of Noesis, in mind], **nor can mind [nous], without impiety, be deemed the subject or slave [doulos] of any man, but rather the lord [archonta] of all. I speak of mind [nous], true and free, and in harmony with nature [or: which, according to its Nature, is indeed True and Free].**" (Emphasis added)

**New translation by the undersigned, based on the one above (with an integrated gloss in Italic and grey):**

"If someone, however, **some day**, were to be born according to **Divine Destiny** (θεία μοίρα; theia moira), and thus come equipped with a sufficiently Powerful (Able) Nature, such a human being would have no need of laws to rule over him, for there is no law or order above **Episteme**, *or Flawless, Divine, Objective Knowledge*, nor may **Nous** be deemed the servant or slave of anyone, since it answers to no one, and is in fact **the Lord of All** (ἀλλὰ πάντων ἄρχοντα εἶναι), for Nous, if in accordance with its Nature, is indeed both True and Free."

(C.f. also Politeia 499b–499c: "The Coming of the Platonic Messiah", as I playfully style it.)

**(p. 343)**

**[Derogatory categorizations like "polytheism" and "idolatry" miss the mark, and are based on ignorance of the actual doctrine, since all the gods and all the facets of nature are in fact viewed by those properly educated in the ancient teachings as expressions and manifestations of the One Supreme Being:]**

**123.** Him [the Supreme Lord] some adore as transcendently present in

elementary fire; others, in Manu, lord of creatures, *or an immediate agent in the creation*; some, as more distinctly present in Indra, *regent of the clouds and the atmosphere*, others, in pure air; others, as the most High Eternal Spirit.

**Comment:** Compare this verse, 12:123, to the amazing Hiranyagarbha Sukta, in Rig Veda 10.121:

1. In the beginning rose Hiranyagarbha, born Only Lord of all created beings.  
He fixed and holdeth up this earth and heaven. What God shall we adore with our oblation?
- 2 Giver of vital breath, of power and vigour, he whose commandments all the Gods acknowledge –  
The Lord of death, whose shade is life immortal. What God shall we adore with our oblation?
- 3 Who by his grandeur hath become Sole Ruler of all the moving world that breathes and slumbers;  
He who is Lord of men and Lord of cattle. What God shall we adore with our oblation?
- 4 His, through his might, are these snow-covered mountains, and men call sea and Rasa his possession:  
His arms are these, his are these heavenly regions. What God shall we adore with our oblation?
- 5 By him the heavens are strong and earth is steadfast, by him light's realm and sky-vault are supported: By him the regions in mid-air were measured. What God shall we adore with our oblation?
- 6 To him, supported by his help, two armies embattled look while trembling in their spirit,  
When over them the risen Sun is shining. What God shall we adore with our oblation?
- 7 What time the mighty waters came, containing the universal germ, producing Agni,

Thence sprang the Gods' one spirit into being. What God shall we adore with our oblation?

8 He in his might surveyed the floods containing productive force and generating Worship. He is the God of gods, and none beside him. What God shall we adore with our oblation?

9 Never may he harm us who is earth's Begetter, nor he whose laws are sure, the heavens' Creator,

He who brought forth the great and lucid waters. What God shall we adore with our oblation?

10 Prajapati! thou only comprehendest all these created things, and none beside thee.

Grant us our hearts' desire when we invoke thee: may we have store of riches in possession.

Source: [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Rig\\_Veda/Mandala\\_10/Hymn\\_121](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Rig_Veda/Mandala_10/Hymn_121)

**124.** It is He [the Supreme Lord], who, pervading all beings in five elemental forms, causes them by the gradations of birth, growth, and dissolution, **to revolve in this world, *until they deserve beatitude*, like the wheels of a car** [a wagon or chariot].

Comment: To live in this world is to revolve like a wheel ("chakra") until one attains to the condition or state deserving of beatitude.

**(p. 343)**

**125.** Thus the man, who perceives in his own soul the supreme soul present in all creatures, acquires equanimity toward them all, and shall be absorbed at last in the highest essence, even that of the Almighty himself.

**126.** Here ended the sacred instructor; and **every twice-born man**, who,

attentively reading this **Manava Shastra**, promulgated by Bhrigu, shall become **habitually virtuous**, [and] will attain **the beatitude** which he seeks.

Comment: “Aristotle describes ethical virtue as a “hexis” (“state” “condition” “disposition”)—a tendency or disposition, induced by our habits, to have appropriate feelings (1105b25–6). Defective states of character are hexeis (plural of hexis) as well, but they are tendencies to have inappropriate feelings.”

Source: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/>

Comment: Here the disparity between the the present translation and the other one, already mentioned a number of times, remains as strange as ever – the one now before the reader, the one by Sir William Jones, with the Kulluka Bhatta gloss, being as superior in terms of the quality of the English as usual, while the Ganganath Jha fails not only to attain to the same level of linguistic beauty – which might be pardonable – but to mention the name of Bhrigu, which is in fact present in the Sanskrit text.

**(p. 343)**

## Notes

[Excerpts from the notes found in the printed edition of 1863]

### Chapter II:

**Verse 25.** The word “universe” has, by an error of the press, been printed in Italic instead of Roman letters, as it originally stood in Sir W. Jones’s works. It may not be uninteresting to observe that the word *sarva*, employed here to signify the universe, in its original and primary sense implies *all, or the whole*. Hence it is employed as an epithet of Shiva, as well as of Vishnu, by the worshippers of those Gods, agreeably to the Hindu doctrine, that contemplates *the universal whole* through any one of its multiform parts.

In the account given in Enfield’s History of Philosophy (Vol. I, p. 64), it will be seen that Zarva was the chief of all the Gods among the Persians, and produced the good and evil principles, or Hormisda and Satana. I think, from the evident connection between the religious systems of the Persians and the Hindus, the identity of the god Zarva and the Sarva of India must be incontestible; and we are thus enabled to take a new and most accurate view of the real nature of the Magian religion.

In it we find the same prevailing idea common in all the theogonies of the ancients, namely, the finite nature of their gods, and their subordinate rank, as the personifications or the powers of *the boundless whole*, that is of *nature*.

**Moses Chorenensis** [now called Movses Khorenatsi; 410–490s A.D.] speaks of the same mythological character under the name of Zerovan. Anquetil du Perron in his Zend Avesta (Tom. II. 90. n. 2.), likewise mentions Zervan, whom he considers as time personified; but the sense of the word *Sarva* or *Sarvam* enables

us at once to find a clue to the real nature of “the chief of all the Gods”.

Good and evil were, under this point of view, the inevitable results or offspring of material existence ; and the pantheism which saw *God in all*, by the language of personification, made *Sarva*, or *the whole*, the parent of the two principles, which were named Hormisda and Satana.

### **Epilogue and reflections by the modern editor (including on the dating of this work)**

One of the most memorable moments which occurred over the course of my long perusal of the Lawbook of Manu, which began in earnest in 2022, took place as I encountered and began envisioning before my inner eye the penitent pilgrim who, in humble obedience to the Dharma Shastra, and to Dharma or Justice, keeps walking along the great Saraswati river, aiming for its distant sources in the Himalaya Mountains, until he either perishes or succeeds. For some reason, the combination of this verse and the meditative music I was listening to, had a peculiar effect on me – one giving rise to a sort of epiphany, which I can still recall in its visual form two years later, as if it were the memory generated by a particularly vivid dream, or an event in the external world. This is the verse I am thinking of:

**11:78.** Or, eating only such wild grains as are offered to the gods, he may walk to *the head of* the river **Saraswati** [or Sarasvati] against the course of the stream; or, subsisting on very little food, he may thrice repeat the whole collection of Vedas, or the Rig, Yajur, and Saman. **(p. 301)**

This verse is also important for a reason very different from the personal experience associated with it, however – the reason being that this verse is one of the two in the Manava Dharma Shastra mentioning the ancient and holy, now virtually extinct, Saraswati river – a river whose extreme importance was later,



when the Saraswati was vanishing, transferred to and acquired by the Ganga or Ganges, it seems. This phenomenon of the transposing of the status and the traditions associated with one location onto a completely different one might perhaps provide one of the keys needed to solve the question of the historicity of the Flood or Deluge, and the enigmas posed by the Sumerian King Lists, the flood tales found in traditions across the world and Plato's account of "Atlantis" and its sudden destruction, but to delve more deeply into that supposition of mine here, would constitute a digression. This is the other part of *the Ordinances of Manu* mentioning the Saraswati:

**2:17.** Between **the two divine rivers Saraswati and Drishadwati** lies the tract of land, which the sages have named Brahnavrita, *because it was* frequented by gods.

Comment: According to the Rig Veda, the Saraswati of fame used to flow somewhere between the ancient channel of the Sutlej (Satluj, Shatadru, Shutudri, Zaradros) river (which lay to the north and the west of the Saraswati) and the Yamuna (Kalindi) river, which lay to the east of it. The Drishadwati was none of these, however, but both it and the Saraswati river have been associated with the so-called Ghaggar-Hakar paleochannel (ancient river bed) found between the Yamuna and the Sutlej. As for "Brahnavrita", we have so far been unable to determine why the William Jones' translation has "vrita" instead of the much more frequently occurring "varta". It does not seem to be a spelling mistake, since the same "vrita" is also used in verse 2:22.

**2:18.** The custom preserved by immemorial tradition in that country, among the four pure classes, and among those which are mixed, is called approved usage.

**2:20.** From a Brahman who was born in that country [Brahnavrita or

Brahmavarta], let all men on earth learn their several usages.

**2:21.** That country which lies between Himawat [or the Himavat/Himalaya mountain range] and Vindhya [or the Vindhya range of mountains or large hills in the south], to the east of Vinasana, and to the west of Prayaga, is celebrated by the title of Madhyadesa, or the central region. [“Madhya” means “middle”. One could almost call it “Middle-earth” or “Midgard”, right?]

**2:22.** As far as the eastern, and as far as the western oceans, between the two mountains [Himavat and Vindhya] just mentioned, lies the tract which the wise have named Aryavrita [or Aryavarta], *or inhabited by respectable men.*

**2:23.** That land, on which the black antelope naturally grazes, is held fit for the performance of sacrifices; but the land of Mlech'has *or those who speak barbarously*, differs widely from it.

**(p. 18)**

## **Reflections on the Saraswati river controversy**

A great, shimmering river, exceedingly mighty and captivatingly beautiful, and in places almost ten kilometers in breadth, the limpid waters of which were thought to originate not in the snow-capped, ever-gleaming Himalayan ranges on the far horizon, but in the invisible Heaven of the gods, the Realm of Truth, and whose broad, winding channel and verdant, fertile banks once nourished one of the most sophisticated and glorious civilizations the world has ever seen, but which then, after thousands of years of providing for the needs of myriads of large and

small settlements and cities, all overlooking or catching glimpses of its deep and ever-changing waters, gradually began to lose its former flow and vigor, and then to dry up and vanish into the increasingly dry soil of an ever more desiccated landscape, forcing not only vast numbers of ordinary people, but countless holy sages and accomplished priests and scholars to abandon the revered habitations of their ancestors, and to migrate to the banks of another river, hundreds of kilometers away, or to leave their homeland altogether – it all sounds about as romantic and enchanting and tragic and strange as it could possibly get, and very much like pure fantasy, would you not agree, dear reader?

Yet this is almost certainly very real, albeit exceedingly ancient history – save, perhaps, for the heavenly origin of the foremost protagonist, the Saraswati – and history which has now, in recent years, been at least partially corroborated and verified and expanded on by geology and satellite imagery and other types of scientific inquiry. It is, to a great extent, the history of India, and it may be said to be at the very heart of that history of Bharatavarsha, for it is the history of the Saraswati river – once as great or greater than the famous Ganges or Ganga, and the inspiration for numerous hymns and reflections, set down in some of the oldest Holy Scriptures on the planet, but now virtually extinct – save for an invisible, lingering flow many meters beneath the surface of the once holy and blessed land, and fading more and more into the merciless mists of history – while nevertheless, from its concealed, almost posthumous existence, arising to defend the Indian conviction of the astounding antiquity of much of Vedic literature (including, but not limited to, the Vedas and the *Lawbook of Manu*) and providing, after decades of attempts to undermine “the chronological pretensions” of the Brahmans, and to stamp Sanskrit Holy Writ with as recent a date as possible, evidence likely to prove compelling and decisive and inescapable, and to vindicate and redeem many, if not all, of the ancient assertions of immense scriptural ancientness.

This is my view of the matter, based on what I have read so far, and I am aware of the fact that many would disagree with what I have now said.

When I first came across the Saraswati river controversy, as I now call it, about two or three years ago, I had never even heard of a river of that name, let alone that this Saraswati had once been the greatest and holiest river in all India, that it was mentioned numerous times in ancient Indian literature, and that its catastrophic disappearance, estimated to have taken place *somewhere* around 4,000 years ago, might provide a long-sought-for way to reliably date some of the richest and most philosophically profound treatises ever composed.

The reasoning is very simple and straight-forward: If a certain geological feature, such as a river, can be said with certainty, on the basis of scientific data, to have no longer been in existence *after* a certain date or epoch, and that same geological feature is not only mentioned by but described by and dwelled on and given a central importance by an ancient text, then one would have to conclude that the text in question, or at least the tradition that ultimately gave rise to the written composition, cannot be posterior to the time or epoch by which that geological feature had vanished from view.

Yes, it is of course conceivable and likely that a famous and vitally important geological feature, such as a huge river, would live on, so to speak, in the imagination of the descendants of the people who had once been fascinated by it, and that later authors might refer to it, but it is extremely improbable that a feature which had vanished centuries ago, and of which only fading memories spoke, could have taken on the type of role assigned to the Saraswati river by the Vedas and the *Manava Dharma Shastra*.

Hence, if we take it as a proven fact that the Saraswati river had dried up c. 4,000 years ago, or, if it had not entirely dried up, was in such a pitiable state that no one could have thought of viewing it as the greatest river they knew of, and then assume that even the most vivid memories of its “glory days” would have all but faded away after a period of c. 500 years, then we cannot but

conclude that the ancient compositions assigning great importance to this river, and speaking of it as if it was still in its awe-inspiring former state, cannot possibly be any younger than c. 3,500 years. Or, to be even more precise – the written texts or manuscripts, the “witnesses” to such compositions, as scholars would say – the paper and ink – may well be far younger, as they clearly often are, but the traditions of which these written texts are the oldest preserved “images” or “likenesses” of, must be *at least* some three and a half millennia old (an estimate fairly close to the one set forth by Sir William Jones in his foreword).

There is another possibility, of course – that of a deliberate strategy of deception on the part of the authors, or of later tampering with the text. But if we for a moment suppose that mentions of the ancient river were consciously made in, or inserted into, the text of the *Manava Dharma Shastra*, for the sake of making Manu's Institutes appear older to the gullible reader than they actually are, then we must also ask why this mention was made only twice, and not in very prominent, very easily accessible places, but fairly deep inside of the work, in the second and the eleventh chapter, many verses away from the beginning and the end of the “Manusmriti”. Moreover, that sort of subtle cunning and ingenious crafting of a sacred text for more or less worldly purposes, seems rather improbable as far as ancient Indian texts are concerned, and would certainly contrary to the spirit of both the *Manava Dharma Shastra* and the three ancient Vedas.

In future editions of this work, I will go further into the Saraswati river issue, and examine what some of the more recent scientific publications on the topic have to say of its supposed “paleo-channels”, which are former river beds easily spotted on certain types of satellite images, and I will also dive deeper into the questions raised by the similarities between the metaphysical schema and the societal structures set forth by Manu, in the *Manava Dharma Shastra*, and by Plato, in his “*Republic*” or *Politeia*.

According to Prof. Robin Bradley Kar, who has studied Indo-European and Proto-Indo-European history extensively, and who has developed some rather “unorthodox” yet very well-founded views on the ancient history of the Saraswati and the “Harappan” civilization associated with it, the divine river – which is perhaps more accurately described as a collection of rivers, i.e. as the *Sapta* Saraswati or seven-fold Saraswati – was not only a real, geographical river once, but was also, very likely, the river running through the ancient, Proto-Indo-European heartland, in which the largest, most remarkable and most diverse family of languages in world (c.f. Kar, 2017, p. 21) originated, and from which several waves of migrations spread the evolving (or perhaps, in some cases, devolving) Indo-European languages to much of the planet.

Prof. Kar maintains, in other words, that the archaeological remains of the so-called Harappan or Indus valley civilization have been misinterpreted, and that this civilization, which exceeded that of Egypt and those of Mesopotamia in extent, was not *pre*-Indo-European, nor conquered by Indo-European invaders around 3,500 years ago, but *Proto*-Indo-European, and that it was this river-centered civilization, likely surrounded by pastoralists who were also Proto-Indo-European, and based in the highlands of Northern India, in a landscape criss-crossed by numerous large and small streams, which gave birth to the countless Indo-European nations and tribes which eventually ended up in locations as far apart as Western Europe and China. This is novel thinking, but it is clearly based on a careful consideration of the available archeological and linguistic evidence. This what Kar writes of the Saraswati river:

“At one time, there was apparently another glacier-fed river that flowed through the now dry Ghaggar-Hakra river bed (between the Sutlej and the Yamuna) but this river was diverted from its course by tectonic shifts long before the Indus Valley Civilization arose. A recent 2012 study has nevertheless established that – during the entire period of the Indus Valley Civilization – there was a distinct and important monsoon-fed river that

flowed just to the east of (and roughly parallel to) its six glacier-fed sisters to the west. This river also flowed through the upper Ghaggar-Hakra riverbed, but it was less prone to disruptive flooding than its six glacier-fed sisters. It therefore provided a particularly reliable basis for robust agricultural production during this period, and the greatest density of Indus Valley Civilization sites have been found along this seventh river. (...).

Because this seventh river corresponds precisely to the detailed and comprehensive description of the Vedic 'Sarasvati' that Ashok Aklujkar has recently derived (independently) from the ancient Vedic texts, I believe we should associate this seventh river with the Vedic 'Sarasvati.' The archaeological record suggests that this river lay at the epicenter of the Indus Valley Civilization and was as central to it as it was to early Vedic culture. Together, these seven major rivers therefore plausibly constitute the famous 'Sapta Sindhu' of the Vedic texts as well. (Kar, 2017, pp. 22-23)

When it comes to the so-called Dravidian hypothesis, which conjectures that the northern Indian civilization, named after the archaeological site of Harappa, was inhabited by Dravidians, and that this supposed Dravidian population was pushed south by Indo-European invaders from a place outside of India, Prof. Kar has this to say:

“Upon closer examination, however, the assumptions needed to render the Dravidian hypothesis plausible are not at all tenable. (...) the northwestern parts of the Indian subcontinent are separated from the southern peninsula by significant geographical barriers, which include the Thar Desert, the Vindhya Mountains, and the Deccan Plateau. These geographic facts render it highly implausible that the indigenous people of the Indus Valley [whoever they were; Kar suspects they were Proto-Indo-Europeans, as already stated] would have moved southeast (through a vast desert, and then over a formidable mountain range) rather than east (along the

Gangetic Plain) when facing any invading populations. In any event, the archaeological record shows no evidence of any significant migrations to the southeast during this time period, and no such migrations are remembered as part of the local history or oral traditions in the south.” (Kar, 2017, p. 29)

In a footnote to the above paragraph, Kar also quotes some very thought-provoking points made by Michel Danino, in a 2007 article and conference presentation named “A Dravido-Harappan Connection? The Issue of Methodology. These are some of the passages in Danino's paper (which also contains some we cannot endorse) quoted from by Kar:

“2. The Sangam [early Tamil] literature is completely silent on a large-scale migration from the North-West (...).

3. There is no archaeological evidence of a southward migration through the Deccan [highland plateau] after the end of the urban phase of the Indus-Sarasvati civilization. In other words, the “linguistic” maps of Dravidian migrations such as R. S. Sharma’s (...) find no confirmation on the ground and belong to the realm of imagination. The only actual evidence of movements at that period is of Late Harappans migrating towards the Ganges plains and towards Gujarat.

4. Migration apart, there is a complete absence of Harappan artefacts and features south of the Vindhyas [the mountains]: no Harappan designs on pottery, no Harappan seals, crafts and ornaments, no trace of Harappan urbanism (including [no trace of] fired bricks with precise ratios), no civic organization, no extensive bronze technology, no set of chert [quartz] weights, etc. Cultural continuity from Harappan to historical times has been increasingly documented in North India, but not in the South. In fact, there is no distinct Chalcolithic phase [or Copper Age] in the South. This means, in effect [if the Dravidian hypothesis were true], that the south-bound Late Harappans would have reverted from an advanced urban



bronze-age culture [that of the “Harappan” civilization, c. 4,000 years ago] to a Neolithic one! Their [alleged] migration to [the] South would thus constitute a double 'archaeological miracle': apart from being undetectable on the ground, it implies that the migrants experienced a total break with all their traditions. Such a phenomenon is unheard of.” (Danino, 2007, p. 10)

As we can see, these observations made by Prof. Danino, if well-founded, as they probably are, must entail the demise of the Dravidian hypothesis – and if this may be said to have taken place, then Prof. Robin Bradley Kar's placing of the Indo-European “Urheimat” in the riverine region of Northern India looks all the more plausible.

To us, this moving of the epicenter of the unique series of events known as the Indo-European dispersal – events which would seem to have been recorded in “caricature form” in the Biblical Tower of Babel narrative – also looks attractive because it would help explain why modern Indo-European languages like those found in Scandinavia, while sharing certain basic features with Sanskrit, also differ widely from and have a far less complex grammatical structure than the ancient language of Northern India, since these huge differences would seem to indicate that the Scandinavian languages have, on the one hand, exceedingly ancient and venerable roots, but that they are also, on the other hand, far removed in terms of both chronology and geography from the ancient “point” of origin – the tendency observable in almost all Northern European languages since at least the early medieval being one of ongoing “simplification”. The ancient Vedic literature manifests, moreover, a striking sophistication and complexity of conscious life and thought which, regrettably, appears almost wholly absent in the life and the cultures of the Scandinavian nations of the last millennium or so – a dissimilarity which suggests that the groups of emigrants which ultimately gave rise to the Scandinavian peoples departed from the ancient heartland at a very early period, before much sophistication had been

attained to, or that these groups somehow managed to forget their ancient heritage so completely that only vague traces of it remained by the end of the first millennium A.D. – a process of “amnesia” which could perhaps have been caused by the loss of the priestly or educated class, or by these groups having come out of sections of the Varna system which had no literacy to speak of when setting out on their amazing westward journey – which certainly required an immense amount of courage.

Here our investigation into the Saraswati river controversy, and the true identity of the “Harappan” civilization, comes to an end – for now. We would urge the reader to carefully consider the contents and significance of the verses included in this abridged version of the ancient lawbook attributed to Manu and Bhrigu.

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